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LETTERS OF YESTERDAY

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By J. W.

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PREFATORY NOTE

This little book of letters owes its existence to a few close friends and admirers of the author, whose personality and natural charm of character exercised so beneficent an influence over a wide circle. It is a selection of letters taken from a considerable correspondence, and was intended for private circulation only. When, however, the letters were read in proof it was felt that they might strike a right note and be helpful as well as interesting to a few of the outer world into whose hands they might happen to fall. It was therefore decided to publish them in the usual way.

June 8, 1906.

LETTERS OF YESTERDAY

THE following letters are taken from a correspondence between the author and a learned Indian friend:—

24th Aug. 1876.

. . . You are pleased to ask my advice regarding your table of daily study, and I frankly give it. I think you are attempting too much, and trying too many roads to reach your goal. There is the risk that in the multitude you may miss the mark, and be making that an end which is but a means to something higher. This I say on the assumption that you are trying to master all these subjects. If you see your way, and are only using them as stepping-stones, it is all well. The end of life, as you know, is action, not thought, and all thought should be subordinate thereto. All knowing should not be for knowing's sake, only for the spirit's sake, as everything else should be. We, in these northern latitudes, have a word "thrift," which denotes a virtue of high avail in life. We conserve what

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serves our purpose, and let the rest go. I give an instance in my own case. I have learned to read two or three languages in which I saw there was help for me, but I found I had no time to waste in learning to speak more than my own. Carlyle, I understand, had a sacred respect for this Scotch virtue, and he deemed it enough to know his French and German in the same way.

I am, like you, a student of the humanities, and there is nothing to me so bracing as the contemplation of the victories of man's free-will. That is the study of studies, and it is to achieve the like mankind is here. I have little or no patience with your evolution theories ; these help not one iota the cause of humankind. A psalm, the eighth in the Hebrew psalter, strikes me as deeply significant. It begins with adoring the majesty of God in the starry heights, and suddenly turns to the sucklings, and exclaims, how passing wonderful : see the Lord has committed all His works into that creature's hands. It was to call attention to the power and prerogative of free-will in man *Sartor* was written, and hardly a reader of it recognises this fact. Nay, it is since *it* was written that the study of nature has come to usurp a prominence in our regard superior to the study of man. We are busy considering what evolution has done for us, when the one prime study according to that man's wisdom is what by resolution we can do for ourselves. And so he is ever appealing to the heroic as the one

divine factor in human affairs, and to the biographies of great men—Columbus the type of them. While as for your so-called speculative problems, much of these he deems it wiser to content ourselves with suppressing than try to solve. Many of the problems we set ourselves to solve refuse solution for the simple reason that we are inside the sphere and not outside of it, and we remain sane only when we content ourselves with the limits that compass us about and hem us in. Science is but a tossing of the ball to and fro, and cannot determine whether the egg was first, or the hen. It is questionable whether, for any human interest, it does not more harm than good, even at the best. All the science in the world is in my regard not equal to the presence and work of a strong, resolute man.

You ask me if Ruskin speaks anywhere disparagingly of Goethe and Emerson. I only notice that he scores them out of the list of the hundred books, and remember that he speaks somewhere of the latter as always observant indeed, but only occasionally wise. Of Goethe he hardly ever speaks. He quotes from him once, I remember, and with approbation. It is the scene in *Faust* where the chancellor conceives the root idea of modern economics. You know it—it is given in *Fors*. He may object to people reading him, as too broad for most men, with whom it can be well only when the path they pursue is a narrow one. As for my opinion about

historians, I am afraid I am somewhat sceptical. History, I consider a book sealed with seven seals, and one which it is not given to man to open. The men who transact it are the more or less blind agents of a higher power, and seldom know the import of their actions. Only in the light of what follows can their procedure be in any measure understood, and it is next to impossible for the living often to reconstrue the situation. Enough if we can extract and conserve the spirit if worthy. The healthiest period in a nation's annals is always silent or soft-voiced; it is only when it is breaking up and going to ruin that it makes a noise and appears in history. This is a great article of Carlyle's creed, and is specially expounded by himself in wider applications in his famous *Essay on the "Unconscious."* The only book of history I am disposed to trust is the mythological, which, when generous, gives the ideal a people strove after such as nothing else does. In other words, I think the imagination the greatest factor in human life, and if I wanted to know the secret of a nation's life I would study its legends. The intellect is the window to let in the light, but fancy is the eye that creates it.

22nd Oct. '85.

You ask me which of the Lives of Christ I think most of. I may say that I only know Strauss's, Renan's, and Neander's, and that I think Neander

the best. He understands best, I think, the genius of Christ's teaching and the antagonistic spirit of the time which called it forth. He justly considers Christ's gospel to have been of personal derivation, and utterly denies that the circumstances of the time before and after had more to do with it than as presenting the dark background to its light. The existence of Christianity is an enigma except on the presupposition of that altogether isolated and singular personal consciousness which we call Christ. Christ's gospel is the moral element in Judaism which has burst its swathing bands and become in Him part and parcel of the free spirit of life. This is true, I think, and Neander seizes this truth better than any other I know. Goethe adds an important point in his doctrine of the three reverences. It is one great point in Christ's teaching to carry His disciples from the first, through the second reverence up to the third and final, and His success in this is His great achievement in the religious history of the race.

As for your proposal that I should write you letters which you might regard as lectures on English composition, I feel some hesitation in consenting, especially as I do not know that I have any special qualifications for the task. If I have any skill in that way, I cannot very well give an account of it, except that I have had some practice in writing and had an instinct for, and read a good deal in, thoughtful, well-written

books. I never studied composition or style by itself, and I don't believe I would have prospered, even so far as I may have done, had I taken that course. Ruskin tells us how he acquired his style, and the rule he followed, under his mother's direction, it appears, was the best. She made him read and learn by heart certain musically rendered chapters in the Bible with special attention to both sense and rhythm ; and this drill Ruskin looks back upon as constituting "the most precious, and, on the whole, the one essential part of all my education." My advice to you would be to adopt for yourself some such course. Read, and *read aloud*—if possible learn by heart, with special attention to sense, accent, and rhythm, anything you may find to have worthy thought in it, well expressed and in good English, and you will find it, I feel certain, far more helpful than any special instruction in composition.

24th Aug. 1886.

Ruskin is now well again, but there is no *Præterita* forthcoming. As to his occasional letters, I shall after this cut out any I may meet with in the newspapers, and send them to you. A volume of some such, you are probably aware, is about to be issued (with a preface by Ruskin) by George Allen. The ordinary critics are much bewildered by these epistles and sadly mistake the character of them. They fancy they are

mere spurts of sudden reflection or feeling, and are too unfamiliar with his writings to know that they are necessitated by his whole system of thought. A gentleman, who admires his other writings, once remonstrated—it was lately—with him on the vehemence of some of his letters, and asked whether he really thought and felt as he said. His answer was, he was truer to himself when he was angry than when he weighed and measured his words. Carlyle was equally outspoken on like occasions, and the critics are equally embarrassed : he is truer to himself at such moments than in his more deliberate speech, nay, they are the justification of feelings which he could not otherwise express. Ruskin's recent outbursts seem expressly intended to test the faith of his disciples and are of the nature of a warning to them, that if they cannot go that length with him they had better turn back. It was so Christ tried the faith of His disciples ; He made the terms of discipleship ever harder and harder, as if with a view to winnow the chaff from the wheat. And the cross which He laid upon His disciples was just this ; they must go all length with Him or give the thing up. To teach that is the special object of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The author of it, writing to converts from Judaism, argues that they must forego all their privileges as Jews if they expected to derive any benefit from the religion of Christ. To think to carry their Judaism along with them

were as hopeless as the attempt of the Californian gold-digger to save both himself and his gold at once. He must either lose his gold or lose himself.

The *case*, you will remember, is referred to in *Fors*, and significant it is.

16th Nov. 1886.

. . . Your letter of the 25th October came to hand a few days ago, and I am deeply interested in its contents. I very sincerely appreciate your speculative difficulties, and distrust as much as you do the results of science and metaphysics, though I have far more respect for the latter than the former as explicating for us the very constitution of our inner self. But it is one thing to unfold the nature of that inner, it is another thing to belong to the inner sphere itself, to those who are sharers in its spirit and life. To this no science or metaphysic can help us, only an actual correspondence with it in the direction of the thoughts of the heart. Clearly it is not enough for us to find out and do what we are fit for, but what we are made and meant for, and it may be the function of "Vernunft" to supply us with a higher ideal than is competent to the "Verstand," which can only arbitrate but not create. It is faith, and faith alone, that can guide and sustain us, and this, as you know, is the cardinal doctrine on which the lives of the noblest souls rest. They are conscious of a power in them and above

them greater and wiser than they themselves, and in it they trust; and this power may, and often does, reveal itself in one other who stands to the rest of us instead of God. Doubtless he feels, as no one on a lower plane can, a power high above him, and feels an inner pulse and an onward beckoning as no other man. Men of this stamp are our kings and priests, whom we do well to follow, and for the end that they should rule and lead us are they *here*.

These men are above all such speculative puzzles as disturb the rest of us, and care not to fathom and scheme out things too deep or too high for them, satisfied, that it is impossible to find one the quotient when divisor and dividend are alike unknown.

We are in the inside and not on the outside, and never will be; so cannot now, nor ever can, understand the great round, still less the great Author of things, "being as soldiers fighting in a foreign land who understand not the plan of the campaign, and have no need to understand it, intent to know wisely and do valiantly what lies to our hand to be done."¹

What you tell me of the Yogis and the Yoga philosophy is very surprising, but no mortals surely ever so mis-read our marching orders as these poor victims of the night. Man, body and soul, is a unity, and by no starving of the one will you ever succeed in saving the other. It is

¹ Conclusion of Carlyle's Essay on Characteristics.

not by starving the body, any more than by pampering it, a man lives. The poor hermits of Christendom thought as the Yogi, but both are wrong. *The animal is the minister of the spiritual*, and is the horse we ride—horse and man one. We shall make small progress in the race of life if we starve the animal that is to bear us on.

You ask me what is the plan of study I have adopted to reach my goal, and what I have found most conducive to its attainment. Alas, dear friend, no man has failed more of the end of life than I have, or was ever less guided by a preconcerted plan. I have floundered this way and that ever since I was born, and have only from time to time sat down in the course of my life to mark the errors I have made by the way. The exigencies of living have compelled me to do what I would not, and I have all my days been like a steam-engine working for mere fuel to keep itself going. It is a hard case, but nearly a universal, and ought to be inquired into more than it is. No man can live as he should be free to do, and the result is, most people are discontented with things as they are. We are all the prey of a huge monster called society, and the wisest are beginning to see that our social condition is wrong. God made man upright, says Ecclesiastes, but he has sought out many inventions; and these, I think, have gone to aid one class in usurping it over another, and now loudly call for being swept away.

Scotland in the last century was witness to a more tragic instance—Burns, with his great glowing heart, not only never making his calling and election sure, but not even feeling that there was any need, so fatally had social disbelief not only shackled his members but bandaged his very eyes. It was, as Carlyle says, “an Iliad in a nutshell.” Agamemnon in the person of George III., head charioteer of the destinies of England, and Achilles in Robert Burns sent to gauge ale barrels in the burgh of Dumfries. But the case is by all accounts worse with you than in this quarter, and the call a louder one to do something to break the yoke. You, with your advantages, may yet live to do something in that direction, only it is a Hercules’ work, the monsters to be slain being at once numerous and of the fiercest type. As things are everywhere, no man can find a goal worthy of him, and in the search no one can much help him but himself. He must content himself with doing what requires to be done, and rest assured that though everything may seem to thwart him, he has all God’s universe at his back. Little it may be he can do in the right direction, but that little if done faithfully will not be lost. *For the soul of the world is just and not unjust*, and the just thing cannot fail to bear fruit.

But I see you ask me to explain what I mean by an expression in my last letter—“all knowing should not be for knowing’s sake,” &c.

What I mean is that no function of the intelligence or of any other spiritual organ is there for its own ends, but for higher, in the concrete totality of the spirit's life. In fact, nothing in the universe exists for its own sake, but only for the sake of the universe of which it is a part. This truth you are no doubt as familiar with as I am, and this brief explanation will enable you to identify what I meant.

3rd June, 1887.

Though brought up on orthodox lines, I soon came to regard Christianity as less a system of dogma than a spirit of life. The inquiry with me therefore for long was what is that spirit, and though I had been previously a student of Neander, one of the most spiritually-minded expounders of the Christian faith, it was not till I read *Sartor* that I found out what that spirit was. That spirit I then discovered to be independent of all speculative opinions, theological and other, and I saw it was altogether dependent on a certain polarity of the thoughts and affections of the life; that it achieved itself in a passage from the "everlasting no" to the "everlasting yea" by way of the "centre of indifference." It may be a question how far Carlyle himself *cleared* the passage, but that is his teaching; that I am satisfied is the religion of Christ, and that is "the final *revealed* religion." This seemed to me to be a distinction worth stating,

and I have thought the statement of it would be interesting to you. It is so Christianity is apprehended by me, and it is so I reconcile the teaching of Christ and the teaching of Carlyle. Nothing so proves a misunderstanding of both as the setting of the one against the other, and neither is so well illuminated as in the light of the other. It always astonishes me to hear a clergyman denounce Carlyle; it shows me to a demonstration that he does not understand his own religion.

29th Feb. 1888.

. . . I am much gratified to learn that you have written Ruskin to express your appreciation of the noble sentiment you refer to. The sentiment he expresses in *Hortus Inclusus* is one which has been often impressed on him, and one to which he has more than once given emphatic utterance. It was first suggested to him by a gentleman, he tells us, as he stood admiring some picturesque hut in the Alps: the gentleman could not sympathise with him out of regard to the wretchedness which appealed to him from within. The remark appears to have stung Ruskin to the quick; and the result is that his studies in art have ever since been liable to be overborne by a sense of the misery which prevails around him, and which no fascination of art can drown. The feeling is one which he gives expression to in the conclusion of *Unto this Last*, when, in

reference to the tragic state of the world around him, he says: "The cruellest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold." It is a situation which so presses at times on his sensitive nature as to become unbearable, and has more than once already brought him to the gates of death. The burden of the world lies on no heart more painfully than on his, and to find a parallel to his sorrow one must go back to the prophets of the Hebrew race, who were stung to the heart by the callousness of the people to the Divine message of which they were the bearers.

9th Aug. 1888.

. . . As I promised to you in my last, I have read over again Ruskin's letters on the Lord's Prayer, and I quite appreciate your estimate of them. They breathe a spirit truly catholic, and such as I would *a priori* have concluded would recommend itself heartily to you. The fatherhood, as well as motherhood, of the Divine Being, which he lays at the foundation of all religious belief, might well accord with what I understand to underlie such faith as from the first had been yours. The tendency of thought under which these letters were written is one, I am happy to notice, which is beginning to prevail among us, and only the other day one of our clergy dared to say, in a conclave of what is understood to be one of the most stiffly orthodox communities

in Christendom, that he believed it was because the Church would not limit her creed to a few rational beliefs that so many rational men scouted her claims. This outspoken clergyman represents a very large body all over the Christian world who are seeking to return to first principles, and resolve the Christian religion for one thing into faith in the spirit which animated, or is said to have animated, Jesus Christ. A movement in this direction is to me especially interesting, and the tendency which it obeys is one which has predominated over my theological opinions as far back as my student days. Since then it has always seemed to me that the first question in connection with the Christian religion is what is the spirit of its Founder, and till I ascertained *that* I could find in it no true rest to myself. And it is because I find that spirit expressed in *Sartor* as nowhere else, that I have ever since conceived such an affection for that book. A friend of mine thinks that Carlyle's regard for Goethe was founded on the revelation Goethe made to him of the truth of the religion of his mother, and I am not sure but I owe a similar fealty to Carlyle because he first showed me both what the Christian spirit was, and that except in it, or something like it, there was no true emancipation possible from the thraldom of life. Ruskin is a man of the same school, as appears in these very letters, and your appreciation of his position as in accordance with your own, naturally gratifies

me very much. Christian and Hindu are but superficial distinctions, and the thought of religious men all over the world is going to prove this truth.

5th Sept. 1888.

. . . Your enthusiasm for Ruskin is very precious, and it is very gratifying to me that you have come to honour one I so highly honour. My appreciation of him is not founded on his criticisms of art, but solely on his views of life, and man in his moral and social relations ; and to interpret his philosophy it is not necessary to have any special acquaintance with art. Indeed, his most trusty admirers and most intelligent interpreters are those who know nothing of art at all. Art is not there for its own sake but the spirit's sake, and it is art in its spiritual significance of which Ruskin treats, and which the intelligent of his students most admire. Unfortunately I know no one who has written any adequate criticism of Ruskin or his teaching.

19th Sept. 1888.

. . . I am sending you by next mail a small book which I have just been reading with deep interest, by the late Hegelian—or non-Kantian was he ?—T. H. Green of Oxford, and which I submit to your considerate regard. It consists of two discourses originally addressed to the students

at the University, the aim of which is to translate the facts of Christianity into facts in the self-consciousness and to render the Christian faith independent of the so-called facts of history, including both myth and miracle. My object in sending it is not, as you may well believe, dictated by any proselytising spirit, but to show how Christianity is now being accepted among us by men of ripe philosophical intelligence, and how those men have taken up ground in their defence of it which is unassailable by the weapons which the sceptic hitherto has employed against it. The controversy in regard to it has become transferred from the old historical battle-ground to a sphere which lies within the immediate knowledge of every one of us, the region, as it seems to me, to which not only all controversy between Christian and Christian must be referred, but all controversy between Christianity and the other faiths of the world. This question is one fraught in the solution of it with issues of the most momentous account, and this book among others is to me a sign that intelligent people are beginning to see whence the light must come to determine its settlement. Meanwhile it is for each nation to interpret the spiritual of its own history, and strip that of everything that is merely adventitious, that the light by which it has been more or less unconsciously led may shine out in its purity.

21st Nov. 1888.

. . . I am sorry I know nothing of Italian and cannot advise you as to grammar and dictionary. I would much recommend you to learn it for the sake of Dante; he, of all European poets of Christendom, is best worthy of your regard. . . . Dante I take to have been one of the finest souls ever made of mortal clay, and sensitive to the misery of wickedness and baseness to a degree unknown to grosser men. He, as such, saw into and could picture, as no other, the miseries of the lost. That Inferno was to him the realest of things, and it was peopled with denizens who had forfeited and lost their birthright as men. Happily he knew of a Purgatorio and a Paradiso, but he never could forget that awful Inferno. Carlyle's lecture explains the nature and the work of Dante as no other critic known to me has done. In Dante, of all poets, you have not in pale reflection, as philosophy may give it, but in living reality, as only a living soul can give it, the essential verities of the Christian faith. The philosopher's judgment is all too abstract; only he can give just judgment whose heart and soul are aglow with the fire that burns on God's own altar, through the very pores of whose body breathes the very spirit of the whole, the all.

7th Dec. 1888.

I am now reminded that this is the mail to send you my Christmas greetings; and this accordingly

I now with my whole heart do. My wish therefore is that the recurrence of the day may be an omen of all highest blessing to you and yours, and that you may all realise the meaning of that great festival. It was a birth-hour of great moment to the nations of Christendom, and not unworthy of pious regard by all enlightened men, the deep significance of which, I believe, few have yet seen into. To me it seems as if there was that day born into the world one to whom, so far as I can hear, alone of men "the Highest had descended and the lowest mounted up," and who was, as no other, the brother both of all the high and all the low, to whom it was no strange thing that the sun in heaven should shine and the rain distil on just and unjust. So, anyhow, I am fain to construe that birth moment, and I know of no other of whom the like can be said. Anyhow, that is what Christmas means to me, and, so meaning, is well deserving of regard by all mankind. It speaks, as no other does, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men." Few days, therefore, more seemly on which to greet each other as brothers, on which greetings should pass between your family and mine.

19th March, 1889.

. . . I regard *Sartor* as supplying the keynote to all Carlyle's system of feeling and thinking, and as giving us the central principle of all that he

afterwards wrote. The physiognomy of the man is there and in all he afterwards said; it is one throughout. You cannot cut him in pieces and say this is there, and that is not there. He is a *whole* man from first to last, and is, in his totality, present in all his works. The reason is it is not the fruit of speculation, but conviction ratified by conduct that is his principle of life, and that principle is part and parcel of his very being, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. He was persuaded of it by his experience of life, and cannot part with it except with life itself. Such a law is recognised in the theological doctrine of what is called the perseverance of the saints, and that doctrine is just another way of saying it is God that is almighty, and not the devil—God, namely, in man's life.

1st April, 1889.

Again I have the pleasure of sending you the report of another, the last, of Dr. Hutchison Stirling's present course,¹ which I am pleased to see is a very excellent one, being by the same hand as the last. The account Dr. Stirling gave of the period from the death of Aristotle to the conversion of Constantine was very graphic, and one was reminded of Dr. Rigmorole's "rare old times," and felt disposed to answer "pretty much like our own." What the reporter has given compels to the same conclusion. The term

¹ *The Gifford Lectures.*

"atomistic" describes the present time pretty much as it does that. We are still in the age of the French Revolution. I think the movement of that time still goes on. Things are still going on in a disintegrating process, and it seems to me the cremation, for it is that, must go on a good while longer before the phœnix bird can rise out of the ashes with healing in its wings. The thinking world are beginning to breathe a more wholesome atmosphere, but it will be long before it become the life-element of the mass. Materialism, I think, shows signs of collapsing, and a more spiritual view of the world is beginning to take root. Dr. Stirling has done, and is doing, what he can to give us a more spiritual view, but it wants that the clergy or priests who are in contact with the masses should take it up. Till then no solid ground-work can be laid for the palingenesia we are all looking for, because till the mass be leavened it breeds a festering element which corrupts the best. Unfortunately the speculative intelligence holds itself aloof too much from the generality, and the thinking classes can't be made to see that they must, if their thinking is not to end in vanity, bring home their ideas to the humblest class.

Our best thinkers think apart, and fail to ally themselves with the world in which they live and move. They are not at pains enough to understand the world as it is, and are out of sympathy with its spiritual wants. There is now no voice

to say "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest." No man knew better that this is the function of the thinking man than Carlyle did, but not even he could go the length of that. The voice he raises is the wisest going, but even he can do little more than bid us each follow his own star. One thing he all along insists on, and that is, that it is with the actual world alone the thinker has to do. His world is a real one, the very world in which he lives and breathes. That is a great point to recall us to, and one to which we need to be recalled. That alone is God's world, in which alone it is given us to sow seed and bring forth fruit. Not with the world above us, or the world beyond us, only with the world about us have we to do. There, or nowhere, is the Eternal One. This is a great gospel, and the fewest have yet laid it to heart. Professor Blackie once asked me what Carlyle had taught me. I mentioned one thing; he had taught me that nobody had been anywhere in this universe but where we are ourselves. "What?" said he; "that's nothing." I said I had not yet met the man who had fathomed its meaning. Professor B. fancies he has to spread himself out to find himself; Carlyle says: "Root yourself where you are; the eternal world streams up upon you there as it does for you nowhere else."

9th April, 1889.

. . . It were a great thing to enlighten us in regard to the philosophy of India, but it were a still greater if you succeeded in showing that the sages, as you will call them, of India have anticipated all the conclusions of the wisest thinkers of Europe. I shall be very eager to learn in what respect this is so, and rejoice if you can make good your contention. I am inclined to believe you may be right so far, being, as I have already signified, persuaded of all the great thoughts known to me, that they stood revealed before the fresh intuitions of the first seers as they have not since done to the late thinkers of the world. I have already said I find I must go back to Christ to know what Christianity is, to Buddha to know what Buddhism is, and to Mahomet to know what Mahommedanism is. These early seers were far ahead of their age, and it is only after centuries of the partial shining of the light that issued from them that other men come to see as they see. Nay; is it not Novalis who says: "The fresh gaze of the child is richer in significance than the forecasting of the most indubitable seer"? And Carlyle says in substance—In these late days we cannot see for hearsays; but in those early days there were no hearsays, and the world was still divine—which it takes a poet like a Goethe to see that it still is.

24th April, 1889.

. . . In all questions of knowledge, as Goethe points out in his autobiography, the question is not that a thing is, but what it is. That the world has an intelligent author is not so important to make out as the interpretation of his purpose, as the ability to see and show that now *is* he, and that there *is not* he, as the possession and the manifestation of a divine sense. What he *is*, is not to be found out by tracing him backward but by tracing him onward, not by grubbing among the roots of things but by discernment and discrimination of the fruits. This, I understand, is the one merit of your Buddhism, that it waives altogether the question of the being of God and sets itself to solve the nature of spiritual being. It does not essay the proof of God's being but the nature of divine being, and says, as I construe, that it begins in the extinction of desire and ends in the extinction of self, resting in the all, or, as the Christian religion has it, in God. The doctrine of Hegel as regards God is, that except in the triplexity of the Begriff and its movement God does not exist, God is not, which doctrine is the doctrine also of Christ when He says, Ιηεῦμα ὁ Θεός—God is spirit, is breath—*Der Process des Geistes*. It is to take God out of God, to resolve Him into something merely psychical, quite as much as to resolve Him into something merely physical, for except as pneu-

matical or spiritual, God is not at all. It is a mistake to attempt to prove the being of God; except by sight of Him, no man will ever be convinced; His presence is matter of intuition and not of proof. It requires something of God *in* a man to discern Him above him.

6th June, '89.

. . . Apart from the Helps, the Bible I send is a copy you will be pleased to have by you to refer to, as likely to be superior to any other you may have. It is, or rather *was*, the sacred book of us Westerns, and held in honour by all our best and noblest men—one spirit breathes through it from first to last in the respect it has for justice and faith in God as favourable to all upright people on the earth. It shows Him as no respecter of persons, and leads up to the perception of this truth, that “in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him” (Acts x. 25). It is not a Jew’s book merely, but “all men’s book,” not indeed to the exclusion of other books, but to the welcome of all others written in the same great interest.

25th June, 1889.

I am interested to know that you are to begin with Vedantism, and that you purpose to present us with the full and ripe fruit of your philosophy

at once. It is the honourable method to pursue, though not always the most politic, as people are often apt in that case to ask indignantly—What ! is this all you have to teach ? We have heard that already; and so on. So often is the value of a thing not appreciable by him who has no experience of the toil of conquering it, and so few know that the value of a thing depends not on the possession so much as the pursuit. In all spiritual things it is not the attainment of the goal that blesses, but the step by step process by which it is reached. Yet for you, in your present enterprise, the problem is to show the conclusion arrived at, and the great interest afterwards will be to study and mark the steps. As I understand Vedantism, it is the assertion of the identity of subject and object, and the resolution of the latter into the former. That is, I understand, the proper postulate of Christianity also, and is at the bottom of Christ's saying, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father : " "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." This at any rate is the idea of Vedantism given in M. Barth's book¹ which I translated, and I shall be interested to learn whether his account is correct. All my study on spiritual matters for the last thirty years and upwards has tended to confirm in my mind the conclusion that Christianity, as Christ taught it, sums up the spiritual wisdom of the human race, and that it is on some such lines as His that

¹ Barth's *Religions of India*.

the wise of all lands and times have fronted the great problem of life—that is, on the substantial identity of the being of man and the being of God. Of course, my Christ is a very different being from the Church's generally; He is to me the symbol of a universal, and I hail something of His image in the personality of every good and great man. No other has ever grasped as He did, without knowing of it, the meaning of the myth of Prometheus, the most significant of all that was ever conceived by the myriad-minded Greek, for I can trace it no farther back. He, at any rate, attempted to answer, and gave answer as no other I have heard tell of, to what you justly say are the three great problems of humanity—who am I?—whither?—and whence? But while I, so far as advised, believe this, it is no interest of mine but the reverse to find that, as Emerson puts it, He exhausted not the virtue of the race. He is *to me* the outstanding figure of a host, the one *I* know best of the good and great of all time.

I have little sympathy with the man who forsakes the faith of his father and mother, and has a greater liking for what I inherit from mine. I never yet met with any man who professed to have done so who could give any rational, credible account of the change, and I have met with not a few whose conduct was traceable to spleen, or some other equally unworthy motive. In fact, the announcement by a man of his con-

version is to be in most cases received with suspicion ; and it is not a thing to make a parade of or a boast.

28th Aug. '89.

. . . It is a wonder to me through how many channels Heaven is pleased to reveal itself on earth, and how the ends of it can by Heaven's grace shake hands together. And it is no less a wonder to see how estranged we are from one another, and how hard it is even for the wisest to realise the essential brotherhood of all men. It is the latter fact which crushes the spirit of nearly all our great world-regenerators, that with such universal grace in revelation, mankind should in all lands be seen preferring the darkness to the light. It is one of the chief sorrows of such a man as Jesus Christ, the thing, I verily believe, which in the end paralysed His arm and broke His heart. As I construe it, it is a heart-broken man that is the God of Christendom, and it is in it, when true to Him, that the worship of sorrow has become the worship of God. The absurd is as ridiculous to a man like Carlyle as to any other, and more so, but the basis of his nature, in sympathy with this, is sad. Wae, wae, in all serious moments, is the burden of his heart. His deliverance that men in the mass are mostly fools is at bottom no joyful fact, but a sad. It was with a depth of sadness beyond fathoming he said of his countrymen a few years before he died—they

have not believed a word I have told them. It seems the most hopeless and thankless of all tasks to attempt to lead the world in paths of wisdom.

All the same, let no man who has a wise word to say hold it in ; it will not fail to yield due return some day.

3rd Sept. 1889.

I am pleased that you so far endorse M. Barth's account of Vedantism, and to have your assurance that *the identity of subject and object*, so vital to all rational religious beliefs, is so explicitly recognised as part of the Vedantic creed. The doctrine of this identity is involved in every attempt to give a rational account of things ever since the dawn at any rate of philosophic speculation, and ever since the thinker set himself to seek for the explanation of things in things themselves. Yet it is not every philosophy that explicitly affirms the principle, and its enunciation would startle many in a Christendom whose faith was nevertheless founded by Him who said, "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30). . . .

It augurs well of the enterprise in which you have embarked that you find, before you can penetrate into the inner sanctuary of your philosophy, that you must draw aside the veil which hides their meaning from all but the initiated. All men with any secrets worth knowing have

ever a way of imparting them which, while it stimulates some, stupefies others ; and it is only to such as believe it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. But this fact must add greatly to the difficulty you must feel in imparting them, when those who first enunciated them despaired so utterly of finding words to make them known. The first teachers themselves cannot impart them, and it is only under such spiritual convictions as you indicate that their secret stands before the mind self-revealed. . . .

There is no better stepping-stone to the study of true philosophy than the study of Carlyle, and if he stopped short of philosophy as taught in the schools it was because he saw, the supremely wise man that he was, that the philosophy in question essayed a problem the solution of which is not within the compass of finite intelligence. It busied itself in the vain effort to arrive at a net quotient when, as he says, divisor and dividend are alike unknown, or to, as Goethe puts it, jump off one's own shadow ; or, as the Irishman thought to do, swim the channel with his head in his teeth. The problems of immensity and eternity were too high for him, as for every man, and the questions he had to solve, if he would live and not die, pertained to his own little sections of space and time. He was, like Goethe, "too much occupied with things themselves to think either of their beginning or their end," and felt that this was "a world in which," as Goethe,

too, has it, "there is much to be done and little to be known." He stood there in the centre of immensities and the conflux of eternities, and the biggest wig in the universe could no more transcend these limits than himself. He knew as well as Hegel that it is of the nature of the Divine to finite itself—to reveal itself in space and time forms; but he also knew that it was only with the finite, the immediate finite, that he and every man had to do—not to search and demonstrate the big law of the universe, but to apply that law, already sun-clear, to the immediate condition and interests of man. With the merely speculative he had no patience; the burden that lay on his heart was the burden of the world's misery and sin. Fain would he have eased the world of that burden, but this he could not do single-handed, and it was his heart-sorrow that those who should have wrought at the task along with him were either idly dreaming or idly fiddling life away. "Not so, my brothers," was his constant appeal, "has one single stone been ever laid on the world pile; not so was any Thebes ever built, or any Troy ever taken." The force of this appeal I have felt, and so I remain steadfastly by Carlyle as my last wise man.

22nd Sept. 1889.

I wish I could advise you in this book matter, but it is out of my beat and would be of no value.

The truth is, though I have read a little in

different languages and dipped into sundry subjects, I am not what is called a book man ; I am not learned in books. I own very few, and the few I have are enough for me. I once had a mania for books, but it died out of me long ago, as soon as I saw and became convinced that the good books of the world are very limited. And I do not find that the limitation I have imposed on myself, or rather perhaps my circumstances for me, is any real drawback. And so I am accustomed to recommend my young friends to prosecute a similar economy, and, tossing the commentaries aside, learn to be content with the sacred texts themselves, which in turn are at the best but reflexes of the light of life within, of the facts of the universe as alone real. This is my steady rule, and it is one the fates have imposed upon me ; and even under it the lesson given is too big for me, and I can only read a line here and a line there. Of the few wise men whose words I study the secret is still above me, and the better I know them the smaller I feel. Carlyle and Ruskin are out of sight beyond me ; how much more Plato and Hegel, who have allowed themselves a longer tether and indulged in a wider swing.

22nd Oct. 1889.

. . . How happens it that, as far as I remember, we have hardly, if ever, mentioned the name of Emerson ? Surely you know his *Essays*, and if

you don't, it is unaccountable that I should never have referred you to them. They are quite in your line, and in close accord, as I fancy, with your way of thinking. He was my favourite author some forty years ago. It is truly amazing what a freshness and pungency of thought I still find in him. He is a gymnosophist, to be sure, but he interests himself in every question that occupies the philosophic mind of the century. He does not feel the mystery and the burden of life indeed as Carlyle did, but he has taken stock of nearly all that was swaying the thoughts and actions of his contemporaries. You may question his wisdom at times, but his observation is nearly always faultless. He is content to take notes of what is going on, and is not troubled, as Carlyle is, with the question, But where is it all going to? This attitude constitutes the radical difference between the two men, which Carlyle saw to his sorrow, but Emerson never did, nor does any Emersonian. He and they simply *remark* things; "Devil take it," one hears Carlyle murmuring in his impatience, "but we are here to *rectify* them." All the same, Emerson's observations are just, and though we must not rest there, there is hardly another author I know in whose vision, apart from judgments regarding them, lie more vividly painted the leading characteristics of the time we live in. If you have not made him a study already, you would do well to devote a studious hour or two to his writings.

C

19th Dec. 1889.

I see you connect your clearer perception of the spiritual with a clearer perception on your part of the significance of "all true religions." . . . The more one lays stress on the spiritual, the more one comes to lay stress on the real, especially the humanly real, as the incarnation of it in spots which are ever the centre of immensities, and in moments which are ever the conflux of eternities. For the conception of the spiritual lands one finally in the conception of an incarnation, *i.e.* of this same spiritual as pervasive of the whole nature of man, not the thinking part merely, but the feeling part as well, and coming out at the tips of the fingers and the points of the toes. For this one looks not to half men, but to whole men, men who, wherever they are, are all there. It is a characteristic of Deity that as Spirit He is all everywhere; the like is characteristic of every spiritual man. In every corner of his sayings and doings the same spiritual essence looks through.

I have read with interest what you say in explanation of the Brahminical origin and transmission of the "Geist," and I much appreciate the force of it. There are races so constituted that they cannot, as they are, receive, or even apprehend, spiritual truth, and others again expressly elected and set apart for both its reception and its transmission. The former, in their wisdom, are always more or less chary of revealing their

secrets to the latter, and are fain, if they utter them at all, to convey them under veils whereby the blind are confirmed in their blindness and the unfeeling in their obduracy. It is the way Heaven protects itself against profane intruders, and the stumbling-block Heaven throws in the way of all unregenerate men. The wise custodian of Heaven's grace is always reminding the less instructed in Heaven's ways of this appointment, and enjoining the imperative caution not to cast pearls before swine, or to give that which is holy to dogs. But how few regard this caution, and how soon does the caution cease to be necessary. The children of the flesh never long continue children of the spirit, and the higher life of the spirit always tends to degenerate into an empty formalism. On merely fleshly lines, the spirit soon suffers arrest, while the law of the spirit is the law of progress. With crystallisation its life surceases, and no power in heaven or earth can restore to it the lost organic life. If a dead humanity is ever to revive, it is ever on the part of men who have been able to burst the bonds of the letter. As I read the history of spiritual life in a race, I find it consists of a succession of deaths and a succession of new births, and the latter, while provoked by, are never produced by the former. The dead carcase often refuses to own itself dead, and the new truth has to assert itself in defiance of it and in war to the death with it. Among the Jews, for instance, of whose

religious history we know more than of that of any other people, this was always so. They were ever lapsing into spiritual death and sinking into a state which called for a new awakening. But this new awakening was ever on the part of men from the ranks of the opposition, and these, according to Goethe, the best, and indeed the only worthy men in the nation. And, as it was in Judea, so has it been, so far as I know, in the history of every other nation that has revived after a period of decay; the new blood through which the quickening came was never that of the so-called *aristoi*. The spirit, as Christ has it, breatheth where it willeth, and one hears the voice of it, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. The men of the sacred caste are ever falling dead themselves, but they do not cease for all that to be the custodians of the religion of the race, and if the racial life is to prolong itself, it is by some sympathetic soul, or souls, reviving in spirit the very principle as transmitted by tradition that presided at the time of its birth. But there are religions that have overleaped the barriers of mere racial limitation, and among these I would include the religion of Buddha, the religion of Christ, and the religion of Mahomet, as these happen to be best known to me. They are all of racial descent, but they all lay their finger on that which is confined to no age and to no race, and is more or less credible and practicable by all the members of the human

family, and if you would recover them in their purity, you must trace the way back along the traditional lines to the fountain-head of their inspiration. There is no saying along what lines the Spirit shall reveal itself ; and when it does so with any power, it always appears in an unexpected quarter, and in a form which gives offence to the offspring of the letter.

I must still, however, take on trust your averment that only a Brahmin can teach, and only a Brahmin can understand, the truths of the "Geist," and I must wait for more light if your averment means more or other than I have admitted. If the "Geist" meant here is simply the Geist-committed to the Brahmin, I quite assent to it ; only I should be loath to think that, as Christianity springs out of Judaism, only a few can understand what Christianity is. On pondering this matter further, I begin to see you must mean by the "Geist" that which has raised the Brahmin to the spiritual level he has reached, and in that sense I can quite understand how only a Brahmin can teach it, and only a Brahmin can attain to it. But then this is in the sphere of what in *Sartor* is called the higher philosophy which Teufelsdröckh pensively indulged in so long as he sat idly ruminating in the highest pinnacle of Wahngasse Strasse, in Weissnichtwo, and before the summons came to him to descend into the angry forum, as it needs must be, to exasperate and divide. It was exactly the thing with which

Carlyle reproached Emerson, that he would not descend from that intoxicating elevation into the common arena and wrestle along with him in rough warfare with the monsters of the deep. Time was when the practice was to slay these monsters as the Spartans did their Helots, but a new spirit had arisen which taught that these were there not to be slaughtered but to be subdued and saved.

Man's mission is to subdue all nature, and especially all human nature, and to suffer nothing of it to go to waste. It can never be a wise economy to waste what is of service, but always to turn it to the best account. That million-headed, million-handed demon is demoniac withal, if we only knew how to exorcise the evil in it, and to quicken the good. If this should be done there must be a way of doing it, and it must be by a process which, while it may originate in the heights, must root itself also in the deeps. There is something in the lowest that has affinity with the highest, and that is the assumption on which every religion that would benefit the race must rest. It is from this principle Christianity takes its start, albeit it must hail, as it professes to do, from above. Nay, it is only those in the upper world that have sympathy with those in the lower, and the God that sits in heaven has compassions in Him that reach down to the lowest depths. These poor, wasted, degraded, suffering wretches have gone there because the gods have

neglected them, and it is by a kind of divine remorse that they at length take pity on lost men. It is not every god, however, that can go down so deep with his message of salvation, and he is a very great god indeed that can snatch lost men out of the pit. It is said by Emerson, I think, of Goethe, that he went as far as Hades and came back, but, so far as I know, he has brought nobody back with him. The like may be said of Thomas Carlyle, that he still lay in the grave and that his death had been followed by no resurrection. Yet this was the end for which he lived, and it is also the aim of the Christian religion, with the spirit of which his whole soul was pervaded. Christ was always looking forward to His resurrection, but it was the resurrection of His spirit in other men, and what, when achieved, was in their experience, as well as in reality, life to them from very death. No doubt He did not, no wise man does, begin his work of reconciliation with the worst class, but with the best, because it is only by beginning with the best the worst can be reached; just as it is only from above salvation in any case can come to man. Our modern philanthropists essay the opposite method, and Carlyle constantly reproached them with beginning at the wrong end; only, which is the right end is with some a question; Christ with His "Suffer little children" leaves no doubt what He thinks is the right. His cause is a lost one, if the best men leave His

side. Hence, if you read the story, His apprehension when it seemed some of those were leaving Him, and hence, in His uncertainty of the final loyalty of those that loved Him, His cry on the cross. It was a principle with Him, too, not only to begin with the best, but to reserve the best for the best. He, too, had His secret, which He kept from all but the initiated, only all the initiation He required was the sacrifice of a child-like trust. The Church has not always acted on Christ's principle, and the Protestant section has been more guilty in this particular than the Roman Catholic; only the latter's profession of mysticism is more of a conjuror's trick: "See, or persuade yourselves you see, the effect, gentlemen; how it is done is past your comprehension." There is nothing really behind this mask; indeed, the Church generally has no secret, and, if she had any, it would naturally hide itself from the light.

That "twice-born" is a significant requirement of Brahminism and one which allies it to the Christian faith. Neither of them considers mere natural birth enough, and both of them require in addition a second new birth. The Church is in extreme bewilderment on the subject, and not one section of it, so far as I know, has grasped its import. Indeed, I myself could not make it out—the Christian conception of it I mean—till I understood *Sartor* and learned to appreciate Goethe's hint in *Wilhelm Meister*, Carlyle dating it from the

moment when, by grace of God, he rose up in full manhood and hurled defiance at the devil, and Goethe from the moment when reverence, the divinest in man, starts into being out of the mean envelope of fear. This, too, is the new birth of Christ, which He taught in Judea 1800 years ago, when, renouncing the spirit of His time, He went off on lines of His own, and required all who would follow Him to begin with some great renunciation ; the whole summing itself up in the saying of Goethe, "It is only with renunciation that life strictly speaking can be said to begin."

Certainly the devil of the past is not the same as the devil of to-day, although the spirit in which he can be overcome may be pretty much the same in all climes and all times. What is the spirit in which he can be most effectually put down ? Can we help each other in this warfare ? or must you and I give him battle alone ? Certainly your slaying of him won't slay him for me ; I must slay him myself as you have done ; only so prevailing should I be entitled to rank, with Thomas Carlyle, amongst the "twice-born" of the Christian. The second birth is ever regarded as greater than the first, and hence, so strongly were the pupils of the Italian masters sensible of the fact, that it was the practice of the best of them to drop their father's name and assume that of their spiritual deliverer.

30th Dec. 1889.

. . . Browning's name has not, so far as I remember, ever been mentioned by either of us, and yet a reviewer in the *Athenaeum* rates him as the greatest Englishman of the century. To me, Browning has always seemed more a foreign than a native poet, and his muse is more at home among the thoughts and people and scenes of other climes and periods than his own. A true poet, in my regard, is a man whose eyes are open to the things about him, and who finds in these materials enough to inspire his song. That Browning had to go abroad for his materials was rather a tragic circumstance, and should have been a monition to him that he was not born in a poetic time. In a sad time such as this, a true poet-soul will feel that he has other work appointed him than singing, and hear rather the call of Heaven to encase himself in stout armour and deliver his message in lusty battle-strokes. This is no time for a man to sing his thoughts, but to speak them and let them fly like thunderbolts of Jove. The born poet in these days will assume the rôle of prophet, and the words he speaks will be as if molten in the fire.

16th Jan. 1890.

. . . I have sad news to write you this mail. Ruskin, it appears, is hopelessly ill. I learn this through a letter from a young lady friend, who is

intimately acquainted with one of his lady attendants. She writes : " I wish I could tell you anything pleasant about Ruskin, but from all I hear he seems very ill in mind and body. He has long, as no doubt you know, had an intermittent mental trouble, and now the cloud hardly ever lifts, and one can only long for death to come and give the touch of consecration to all the fine and noble work he has done. I suppose he had, more than most men, the artistic temperament, and the very fineness of the quality of his brain made it more dangerously sensitive." So that it would seem there is no hope, and that he is about to add one name more to the sacred martyr-band that have been tortured to death by a harsh, misjudging world. For there can be no doubt it is the contradiction he has all along been the victim of that has induced these attacks and precipitated this crisis. His fine genius did not suffer him to live acquiescently among us. Carlyle's stronger soul and sterner nature enabled him to hold out longer against the buffets of the world, but that he felt these as keenly as Ruskin has done is evident, for the last words he uttered to Froude in a state of delirium on his death-bed were : " Is it not strange that these people won't let me alone ! "

4th Feb. '90.

. . . The fact of God is a great fact, but what that fact means to us is a greater, and is the

question of questions in connection with the subject of natural religion. Thousands and thousands of people believe in the being of God, but are no more affected by it than if they believed it not. Proof after proof never brings them nearer a heartfelt faith, which is the only thing worthy of the name of religion, and leaves them pretty much as if they were without God and without hope in the world.

God is not a *was*, but an *is*, everywhere the Eternal unveiling Himself in time, and the atheism against which *Sartor* protests is exactly the science which ignores this fact, which has lost the "thin" green veil of Persian silk which Teufelsdröckh had preserved along with his very name.¹

27th March, 1890.

. . . As I look around me here all departments of our life and thinking seem big with revolution, and it is hard to predict what may happen when the fermenting process going on is done. There is a "shaking" in things in heaven, so to speak, as well as in things on earth, but a necessary, I fancy, "so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain." The retirement of Bismarck in Germany is an event significant of great changes, but what may come out of it no man can tell. The phœnix-bird is everywhere on her funeral pyre, but who detects the "organic filaments" which are shooting to and fro underneath in

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, Book II. chap. i.

promise of the life to come, when the old shall have sunk in ashes ? My interest in these things going on grows more and more every day, and I feel more and more that it is with the world as it is that living men have alone to do. How I wish I could persuade my young friends about me that except in relation to *things as they are* their life is only all too surely fated to pass away in vain. You know the motto on the title-page of *Sartor* :

"Mein Vermächtnisz, wie herrlich weit und breit !
Die Zeit ist mein Vermächtnisz, mein Acker ist die Zeit."¹

but who reads it or understands what it means ?

. . . You ask me whether I think Ruskin's heart a *kinder* and *nobler* than Carlyle's. I am very unwilling to contrast these two men to the disparagement of either, and I am perhaps still more unwilling to differ from you in your opinion. But I really am not able to see my way to conclude, as you do, that, in the regards you refer to, Ruskin stands higher than his master. It seems to me Carlyle could not have been the man of sorrows he was, such as every line on his face even shows him to have been, had his heart not been of the *tenderest*, and he never would have so wrestled to the death for us had his soul

¹ "My inheritance how wide and fair !
Time is my seed-field, to Time I'm heir."

not been of the very *noblest*, a man he, compacted of sunshine and tears ; a light to all of us in the midst of a well-nigh universal darkness, being moved to the very soul at the plight we were all in.

Next to Carlyle I certainly rank Ruskin, and perhaps he has done more to explicate Carlyle to me than Carlyle himself ; nevertheless, I must regard Carlyle as the master, and Ruskin in no points as a man his superior.

The argument of the Yoga philosophy in proof of the existence of God which you refer me to, is, I consider, a perfectly sound and just one ; it does more than prove His being—it helps us to a right conception of Him, as the universal of which the phenomenal is the particular, the infinite of which it is the finite, the perfect of which it is the imperfect, and the unity of the manifold of being. The infinite, Carlyle says, clenching all this, is more sure than any other fact. It is the final aim of philosophy too, to find the one which underlies the many, and which in the Hegelian philosophy, as in the Christian religion, if not also the Brahminical, is, as soon as it comes to light or to itself in consciousness, a *threefold*. And it is the same with man as it is with his Maker ; he, too, is nothing less than the totality of all he has been and done. Each individual refers you to a universal which is He. So I construe it ; I suppose my construction is similar to your own.

You ask me what I consider John means when he says the "Word *was* God." That has long been, and still is, a puzzle to many people, and if you look into *Faust*, you will see how Faust puzzles over the term "word." To me it seems you must take the term in verse 1 in the same sense in which we meet it in verse 14, where it is said "the Word became flesh," *i.e.* found substance and expression in the life of Christ. The "Word" here, *i.e.* in chap. i. 14, is just the Spirit of the man Christ, and the opening verse of the chapter tells us that this Spirit is eternal and divine, that it is the Spirit that worked in the beginning, was with God, and was God. It was an objection taken to Christianity at the beginning that it was a new religion opposed to the old—opposed to Moses, for instance—and Paul's defence was, it is as old as Abraham, while John went farther back and maintained it was as old as eternity, that in Christ the same divine Spirit might be seen working that has been working since the beginning of time. It is in John's Gospel, viii. 58, that Christ is made to say of Himself, "Before Abraham was, I am," in the assured consciousness that what was in Him was older than any man and appealed to an eternity before man was at all, as any one might do who stands as He did on an eternal truth. The Bible begins with the assertion, God made man in His own image, and it ends, to the dismay of all the slaves of time, with the history

of a man who dared to defy the time-spirit and claim to be the Son of God.

Referring, before I close, to what I have said on John i. 1, I quote for you this from Carlyle : " Man is properly an *incarnated word* ; the word that he speaks is the *man* himself." In like manner, and with still more truth, might it be said of God that His Word is Himself ; only John's assertion is not that the Word *is* God, but that it *was* God, implying *is* of course.

23rd April, 1891.

The readiness with which you have all along entered into my views I ascribe to your having already arrived at the central principle of my life-philosophy before I knew you, which refers all of vital in man's life to the immediate presence of the divine at the centre of man's nature. All of the divine, which we justly regard as of supernal derivation, I have ever since I had any religious convictions, all along conceived of as welling up from depths within. The upper I have for long regarded as communicating and revealing itself by and through the inner, which holds within it all that has had and can have birth in time. It is only of late years, however, I have begun to regard that as a process, and as virtually non-extant except in transit from unseen to seen and inner to outer, as only anything in becoming and being actual flesh and blood.

It is so, I believe, with everything that can have a spiritual existence, and it is so with the religion of Christ, which holds especially of what is of the heart of both God and man. By this conception you bring home the doctrine of the Trinity, and make it essential to the idea of God as not only ruling in the universe, but as living in the heart of man. God never is there or here but as three in one, and except under the idea of the spiritual it baffles me to know what the Trinity means. It is appalling to think, however, of the consequence of this doctrine in relation to Christianity as now professed, and it is the formulating of this inevitable deduction that makes me shudder from going forward with the thought.

6th Jan. 1892.

. . . To me this time-life is a section of the eternal, on which it rests, as the eternal does on it. What is now was in the beginning, and will be at the end—and so intensely is the universe permeated by one soul that it is as much present here as it is anywhere. . . . The stuff of this time-world lies in eternity, and it is *in* time and *of* time the eternal world is built up. Without eternity there were no time, and without time there were no eternity ; they are mutually integral parts of one whole. The universe articulates itself and first properly exists in time.

D

30th Jan. 1899.

After that serious illness I had last spring, and the tedious convalescence since, I feel I ought to let you know how I fare now. I am glad to say, though my strength is not, and never will be, what it was even before I fell ill, I have got so much of it back as to enable me to do a little work with my pen, though I am still incapable of all physical exertion, except on a fine day to take a short stroll along the beach. I work away for some five hours a day, or so, and after a rest in the afternoon, I do a little quiet reading. In my reading I break no new ground, but only retrace again my old trackways. I stick close to my old masters, and I find communion with them, as of old, both edifying and delightful. We have a Scotch song, "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot," which most Scotch families sing in the New Year, and it has a charm in it to make old men feel young again. That charm I feel as I con over the old pages, and I clasp them to my bosom as old friends. And yet none of them, though old, have lost their freshness, and their power is as great over me as when I first felt their spell. It is a *tête-à-tête* I hold with each in succession, and the one I hold most steady converse with now is of the latest connection I formed. I mean John Ruskin; though Hegel is of late date: but then I did not, and do not, know him so intimately—only in some leading points.

And Ruskin I know better by his ethics than by his æsthetics, though in his writings, as in his mind, the beautiful and the good are one. And the ethical writings of his I value most are those which bear on life in society. Society is made up of individuals, and the character of the individuals determines the character of the community; but the latter reacts mightily on the former, so much so that, as Emerson finds, it is often as if in league against the sanity and integrity of the soul. Yet, indeed, it is only in society that religion and morality can exist, and hence the promise of Jesus Christ to His disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of you, to bless you and do you good." Hence the interest in Ruskin's social ethics, and the inquiry he institutes into the principles upon which any just and solid relationship between man and man can subsist. And the books of his I find most edifying on this subject are *Unto this Last*—a work the wording and logic of which is flawless—*Munera Pulveris*, *Time and Tide*, and *Fors Clavigera*; all of which promulgate a philosophy of sound life, every part of which, if reduced to a system, would be found to fit into another as feately as stone to stone in the most perfect architecture, yet every principle of which rests on its own ground, while it reaches down to the foundation of the whole structure. . . .

I recommended Ruskin to you long ago as a

master of English, but I don't think I have before signified to you my regard for him as a "social reformer," and I don't know if you know of a book that recently appeared entitled *John Ruskin—Social Reformer*, by Mr. Hobson. That book I would especially recommend to you as presenting in a *connected* form the substance of Ruskin's teaching on social ethics, the perusal of which, if you have time and inclination, would much gratify you, though I confess to you Ruskin's own seemingly confused way of presenting his views is of more human interest to me. It is the way nature presents herself to us, not after the order of scientific arrangement, but in a confused mass, charming us by veiling her face here and revealing it there.

I am busy with the *Fors* just now, and I manage by reading it slowly and weighing word by word, as one requires to do, to read one or two a day. *Fors*, as you know, was a monthly letter which Ruskin started in '71, and conducted for eight years, and the sole principle of order that dominates it is the occurrence of anything that might throw light on either the negative or positive side of his teaching, his quick eye seizing at once any *transiency* that fitted that purpose. It drew him more and more off his proper course as a student and teacher of art, for it opened up to him more and more the vanity of expecting any good to come out of teaching art to a generation that was wallowing in lies and in injustice, though his

great Pre-Raphaelite movement was due to the discovery, which he and Carlyle had made simultaneously, that the "devil had run away with the fine arts," and a reformation was called for in them as well as in society. And this discovery in regard to the fine arts prepared him to expect the devil was no less busy in other spheres of activity; and he felt before he threw down his pen that both cases were equally desperate—that, for aught he could say or do, things would take their own course, and he might as well go to sleep in the midst of things into which, it would seem, he has now helplessly and hopelessly dropped.

His books, however, are there, and Carlyle's; and the hope of the latter before he died was a judgment-day that might be expected to wake up the dullest to give heed to his warnings. With which consolation a man like Browning rested content; not so either Ruskin or Carlyle, both of whom look to an awakening of the general soul of man if the purpose of the Eternal is ever to realise itself in the world. You remember the motto to the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*: "Then said his Lordship, 'Well, God mend all.'—'Nay, by God, Donald, we must help Him to mend it,' said the other." Seen from this corner of the world, however it may appear from yours, the law of the universe reveals itself as justice administered quietly all along, and judgment, when nothing less will do to waken us all up to see that justice is done. For it is with this world we have all

primarily to do, and no hope of justice in another world will mend matters here. The belief that justice will be done, won't establish justice anywhere—only the practice of justice itself. That is the pith of his gospel whose works are now my study ; and it is a brave gospel, bravely vindicated.

7th Feb. 1900.

. . . In the death of Ruskin we have lost one last witness for God's truth among us, though happily being dead he yet speaketh, if we would only listen to him now that he is gone, as we did not do when he was alive in the midst of us. He fascinated us with his style, and we paid no heed to what he saw, as we did to his master before him ; and not one of the notices of his death that I have seen pays any heed to it except to carp at it. A light of the firmament has sunk beneath the horizon, and in the retrospect we regard it as a Will o' the Wisp and a mere earthly meteor. "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument ; for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezekiel xxxiii. 32).

SOME LETTERS TO A DAUGHTER ABROAD

1st Oct. '82.

. . . Such epochs as the present the world has seen before and weathered, and she will weather this too. I have been a good deal occupied lately in studying Buddhism, and am surprised to note how and when it originated, which it did in India 482 B.C.; it weathered the same sort of crisis and prevailed. There was then Brahman on the one hand saying "God," and the philosopher on the other saying "Science," and life was unsatisfying with it all; until Buddha arose, and he said, "No; life is in our own hands; only ourselves can make it or mar it; we are free, and no fate can save us if we abuse our freedom, and no fate can hinder if we think and act as men God-made. Immensity and eternity are in us, and are only in us by throwing them up for here and now." So says Christianity too, if we had ears to hear, which we may have, if we have sanity left in us to feel the frivolity at the heart of every man and thing that would withdraw us from a sense of the ultimate sacredness and grandeur

of the issues of our own time-life. For more than 2000 years Buddhism has kept saying, by its worship of a human life, Yes ; and so has Christianity. Both of them find salvation in the Spirit of God, manifested in a time-life ; that is God, that is all, that is enough and satisfying. But I am afraid, dear M., much of this will seem obscure to you. It is not easy to write of such things, still less in a few abrupt words, as here. Practically it comes to this ; the thing lies not in what others and institutions undertake to do and show, but on what you yourself think and do. It is life from eternity sowing in time what alone lasts for eternity. Nothing not time-sown is for ever.

29th Oct. '82.

. . . This was winter communion Sunday. . . . Dr. H. preached a sermon on "Love" as of God, but it was founded, I imagined, on a too sentimental idea of what was meant by it. He made it a feeling, a passion even, for a person, instead of what it is in the Christian religion, a surrender of self as an organ of the Spirit for the good of others, a devotion to an interest for the furtherance of which one would willingly part with life and all that life holds in it, a making of one's self a sacrifice for a good that is thrown away if it is limited. Communion Sunday is to me always an unsatisfactory one, and on few

other Sundays of the year does the terrible degeneracy of the Christian religion impress me so gloomily. I feel so intensely that of all our hypocrisies it is the most appalling, and no one in which the contradiction between what we profess and how we practise is so monstrous. It meant at first—as Christ gave what was His life for me, so I give what is my life for you, but now it says, in Christ's name too, in spirit as well as in form, Christ gave His life for me, but I give *not* mine for you. No one wants anything spiritual, no one gets anything spiritual, and no one gives anything spiritual, and the whole business is a huge mockery ; a dreary, dreary affair to me

Carlyle and Emerson with Ruskin are, as I have been writing to A., after thirty years of familiarity with all sorts of literary men, by far my *wisest-spoken*; and are singular among the writing class, that they are writers not for writing's sake but for truth's sake, only Carlyle's and Ruskin's aims are more *spiritual* than speculative—they, intent on the truth you can incorporate in your being, Emerson, intent on that which you can array in propositions before your brain ; all three inconsiderate of the consequences of truth loyalty. . . .

Dr. H. has not—or if he has, he does not bring out—a sense of the eternal antagonism there is between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. The breath of that Spirit is, as it has

ever been, not a winning, but a *winnowing* one, and separates, as with the blast of judgment, the chaff from the wheat among the sons of men. Christ's ministry was a sifting one, and He gives His life only for such as are His. The whole Bible is grounded indeed on the supposition that there are children of Belial and sons of God, and its prophets throughout preach not to please, but to save and to separate that they may save. And when their spirit passes into Christ, it repels and repels, till those who were won even were at length almost ready to go away too.

It is this *winnowing* force, I think, which is wanting in modern Christianity; and this latter is weakly, worthless, because its horror of the devil is not equal to its hope in God. It sanctions a copartnery which is incompatible and conducive to no good result, and its ministers are for most part too much afraid to give offence to the devil. They don't even give you interest for your money. My friend Dr. H., brave as he looks, and in many respects is, is afraid to give the devil a bit of his mind, and could not, in fact, get along in that world of his without the devil. But those who can dispense with his patronage are quite exceptional men, and have, to begin with, as good as forsaken all to be looked for from that quarter. But men are like children, they look for prizes; and the only prizes the gods give are what gold cannot buy.

23rd Nov. '82.

Venus, you must know, was not made of clay, or Hartz-rock, as the Germans fable of themselves, but of the liquid ocean, and is an expression to us of the Greek idea that beauty, like the poet, is not made, but grows from an element entirely plastic, a thing you may look for in the ideal world of the artist, but never in real life, where the Son of God Himself "has no beauty that we should desire Him, His visage more marred than that of any man."

And now, to your chivalrous attempts to defend Carlyle. I see you are asked to say what lasting *good* he did; and you say you cannot answer. It is not easy to answer such a question when it is put in the form of a *defiance*; in that case a wise person will shut his lips, and answer nothing. That was what Christ did when Pilate asked, What is truth? But, if the question were asked in a spirit of inquiry, an answer might be attempted. But, first of all, I might be entitled to ask of the questioner, what he means by "good." If he means what good has he done in adding to our gains as men of the world, I would say—"Nothing." But I would ask them, Is there no gain but a worldly one, to the extent mayhap of, through the loss of the world, helping us to recover our souls? And I would argue, fortified by my Christianity, that there is a gain which the world knows nothing of, and that was

what Carlyle sought after, and found withal, though he should be reproached with having in other respects done *no* "*lasting good.*" I find that the same challenge has virtually been cast back in the teeth of all our teachers, and that what the wisest of them have taught is quietly treated as of *no account*. They do not help us to gratify our passions for this and for that, and we insolently ask, What is their worth? Yet their worth is priceless, and just because money cannot purchase their wisdom, and no money can represent its worth. If we knew our spiritual wants a little better, we would know their value, and be ashamed of the question, What "*lasting good*" have they done? They have gained for us "God, freedom, and immortality," and of that no one will make question that it is a gain who knows what these things are. It is in this sphere Carlyle is precious to us, and far more than any other modern man. He has told us, if we are ever to be men and enter a divine kingdom, we must quit our follies, and frivolities, and knaveries, and disloyalties, and mammon-worship, and other worships, and become entirely honest, and honourable, and worthy, and loyal-hearted, and true—and think and say and do only worthy things. No man has said these things with such emphasis in these days, and if it were not that men have universally paid no heed to him, no one durst ask what "*lasting good*" has he done. The proper question in regard to him and the like

of him is not, What lasting good *has* he done? but, What lasting good would he do, if we would let him? It were just as reasonable to complain that Christ is no Saviour, because He has not saved us, when He has not done so simply because we won't let Him. But the truth is, no one can come under Carlyle's influence without feeling the worth of it, and whoso asks what lasting good has he done, simply knows nothing about him, or is basely unsusceptible of noble emotion. I suppose if a year or two after the death of Jesus of Nazareth any one had happened to say a word for Him in the Roman Senate, he would have been twitted with the challenge—Why, what has He done?

25th March, '83.

. . . I was through spending three days at Glasgow last week, and the experience, with John Bright's harangue to the students after, has given rise to reflections that have been slowly forming as to the comparative civilising effects of life among ideal and life among so-called real interests, and the fearful issue too surely ahead should the latter swamp the former. Life without ideas is not worth the candle, and I would not part with what of these I have acquired, poor as these are, for all the money-making possible without them. My answer to those who deny ideas is, What, then, of Jesus of Nazareth and His heaven-exalting gospel? What else is Christianity, I would like to know,

but life in ideas, and what a very dog-hutch it were if our life were bereft of it and kindred inspirations? John Bright is applauded for questioning, in his poor wooden nature, the saying of Job, "man is born to trouble," &c.; and yet no venerable name or life of man under the sun but was a sad one, struggling with trouble more or less "of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The Christian religion is defined by Goethe as "the worship of sorrow," and as such a height of the highest destined for man.

The perfection of the human being is no doubt, as the Greeks fabled, when Euphrosyne or gladness presides in it; but that is not now possible, "the cruellest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold." And if true nobility is ever again to distinguish any life, it must needs be under "escort of a pandemonium" more hideous than ever yet confronted the onward march of man.

8th Oct. '83.

. . . Germany, you will see, is preparing to celebrate the fourth centenary of Luther's birth, and only now has a life of the reformer been written that has taken the measure of him. It takes a long time to understand such a man, and the centuries since have been only developing what is in him.

Emancipation is the word, but that has been prosecuted with a recklessness that would appal

him. We have been laying stress on the word "private" when we should have laid it on the word "judgment," and we have been less intent on consulting the votes of the destinies than in recording our own. For this Luther is to some extent answerable, though he, in asserting his own rights, at the same time asserted the rights of the Most High. His emancipation was in the name of God; ours is too much in the name of the devil. But it is ever so; your Prometheus steals the fire of the gods to inform the work of man therewith, while others catch up the fire and use it destructively. It is a theft the world is smarting for; the heavens won't long stand the waste.

Have you made any way in reading *Unto this Last?* There are principles laid down there by Ruskin that will carry us back before Luther's time, as there are in his writings on Art those that carry us before Raphael. If what he says there is true, we are pretty much off the lines, and those insisted on are of date older than the post-Reformation period. Industrialism is now the word, only all industry must be human and not inhuman—from man and for man; as man, not as animal. Conducted on the principles of that book, which are the principles of all the wise who have spoken on the subject since the world began, industrialism would rest on a new basis, and we should have a new heaven and a new earth, worthy at length at once of man and the

Maker of man. Life, it seems to me, must be constituted and organised on some such basis to be durable, and it is one the adoption of which would involve a radical change in our life and regimen.

20th Nov. 1883.

Did I ever tell you the fable of St. Christopher? It is one of the most significant ever imagined, and one which is dead against the idea that any Christ will ever bear us into a haven if we do not ourselves first strive to bear Him into port. The giant comes to a stream, dark and turbid and troubled, which is just the river of time on the other side of which is eternity, and he finds he must not only ford the stream barefooted and single-handed, but that he must bear a little infant on his back. This little infant gets heavier and heavier as he crosses, and he falters and stumbles and is baffled; but the infant is Christ and he St. Christopher, for so his name means, is the Christ-bearer, and symbolises the Church.

It is a conception that is dead against the idea that Christ is here to bear us into eternity, when it is ours to bear Him. This fable is an old one, and puts to shame the fancy that we are an advancing age. It represents Paul's idea, and he knew what Christianity is far better than we *yet* do—that the Christian life is a conception of Christ in us, and a labour till He be brought to the birth *in this time-world too, the moments of*

which alone make up man's eternity. It is when an Oliver Cromwell has given up the ghost, that Carlyle quotes appropriately—

“ See'st thou not,
The storm is changed into a calm
At His command and will ;
So that the waves which raged before,
Now quiet are and still !
Then are *they* glad, because at rest
And quiet now they be :
So to the haven He them brings
Which they desired to see.”

“ Their works follow them.” “ As, I think,” adds Carlyle, “ Oliver Cromwell’s works have done and are still doing.” Of the St. Christopher ford Ruskin says, addressing his pupils at Oxford last May : “ That ford you have to pass barefoot. Your youthful days in this place are to you the dipping of your feet in the brim of the river, which is to be manfully stemmed by you all your days ; not drifted with—nor tossed upon. Fallen leaves enough it is strewn with, of the flowers of the forest, moraine enough it bears, of the rain of the brave. Your task is to *cross* it, your doom may be to go down with it, to the depths out of which there is no crying. Traverse it, staff in hand, and with loins girded, and with whatsoever law of heaven you know for your light. On the other side is the Promised Land, the Land of the Leal.”

2nd Dec. '83.

It is a fearful bondage the world is involving us in, and whoso feels how its yoke galls should not, especially if he sees where the shoe pinches, quietly submit and raise no protest. The rights of property are all awry in the world, for no man is entitled to any claim at the hands of others for which he has not some service done to show as his right. The ideal of our social life is that of the body and its members, each ministerial of others, and deserving only of amputation if not. And yet, as things are, we are *not* members of one another in this sense—society is a monstrosity in which each member is eating out the other's life. And not only is this state of things regarded as normal by the world itself, it is regarded as such even by the Church. Hardly a single clergyman I hear tell of but, though he preaches the necessity of a conversion, is persuaded that the economics we live by are all right. And Isaiah, were he to rise again, might exclaim once more with truth : "Who is blind as the Lord's servant ? and deaf as the messenger that I have sent ?" The Church has all but lost sense and sight of the eternal antagonism between Christ and Antichrist, and of the downright anti-Christianism that pervades and is the life of this world's affairs. The light of Christ shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. This was the fact that amazed the author of

John's gospel ; it is no less a fact and an amazement still. There are some few whose eyes are opening, but these only awakening, and may sink back into sleep and blindness of vision, as many others before them have done. . . . The temptation all clergymen have to contend with is that they must preach as the people wish them, or preach to empty pews ; and this is a temptation that the fewest are able to withstand.

29th Jan. '84.

I am very busy just now, as I have to be, but I must snatch a few seconds to write you. Doing so is always one of my pleasantest duties, and one which you assure me yields pleasure to you. This assurance enhances the pleasure, and it always moves me to write what lies nearest my heart ; for it is my heartiest communications I find which gratify you most. Pity only that what one writes should be more negative than positive, but if we don't feel first and see the wrong of things they will never be set right. "Thank God," says Carlyle, "for your *ennui* ; it is your last mark of manhood—a sermon from the deeps till you wisely interpret it, or oblivion come and swallow up it and you." Life was not meant to be so unsatisfactory, and it announces itself as such that we may inquire after a more excellent way. This, as I heard the other evening from Dr. Rainy, is his view of the law of the

Eternal, and he thinks it a sign for good, in fact an admonition from the Lord, if we duly feel "how weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" are the common issues of our life. His text was the "whitening of the fields unto the harvest," and this was one of the signs that we felt life so. Pity, though, that Churchmen should so generally misinterpret this feeling, and construe it as a justification of the hope of a hereafter, instead of enforcing it as a reason why we should set about a more satisfactory life here, one chief joy of which shall be the thought that when we part with it, it is only that we may take it up again. Regard for this feeling and its divinely authoritative character should give a quite different turn to their whole preaching and their preparatory training. It is things in this life that are wrong, and that have to be rectified. If they can do nothing to help us in this matter, they and theirs will have to go. They are, for great part, one of the things of which the world is getting weary, and stupid people think for that reason the Church's day is done. I have no such fear, but the Church must turn over a new leaf in this matter, and understand why she is here. She must know that her problem is a *this-life* problem, and must boldly grapple with it in all its outs and ins and ups and downs. Her business is to apply the light and wisdom of the Eternal to the affairs of time, and to first of all apply the fire of heaven, that this may be done. It is this last

necessity which makes her pause, as it did her Master ; " I am come to send fire on the earth ; but how am I straitened till it be accomplished." It is a troubled water-flood she has to face before she can ferry her Christ across the time-river. She has for the last eighteen centuries at the best stood timidly hesitating in part of this time-river ; but the time, it seems, is now come when she must cross it or die. The world is panting for a new arena, and the Church must lead the van or go to the wall. She has to do battle with the whole world-power, and dare it, in God's name, to its face. She must say to the powers that be, " Leave us alone, and give place to braver and better men." This and not namby-pamby sentimentalities is what she has got to do. There is no Christianity or Christian life possible as things are. A change is necessary for the interests committed to her, and the Church must call for this change.

12th Feb. '84.

So you are beginning to find South America a place of sojourn more than elsewhere, and that your friends leave you sooner than in the old countries is the rule. That I, from the first, apprehended, and it is a situation of things not the most desirable for a human soul, which is always best off there where it firmly roots itself as in a terrestrial home. However, there you are with your nearest and dearest beside you, and those

next dearest and next nearest not, after all, so far away. The old home-roots are only outwardly, not inwardly, detached from the soil they first spring in, and you are a genuine daughter and sister of the old loved land. There you are still ; thence you still draw your proper life-nourishment, and to it you belong, whether there or here. You have much to be proud of, much to be grateful for, in your country, for it bred a race, as few others, with the fear of God in them, and no other fear. Thanks to our stern climate withal ; our sires could only battle with and vanquish it by the grace of God in their own souls. A valiant people mellowed of all their Norse fierceness by that nobler valour which hails from the worship of sorrow revealed in the Christian cross. They, the most of them, under our feet here, and we, their children, not so respectful as we should be over their graves : "graves under us silent," their tenants nowise reproaching us, any more than the "meek stars." This is my brief word to you this time. I am overtaxed with work and can find no more time. . . . "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." All things begotten of the Spirit can only be understood by those who are born of it, and those who are born of the Spirit are alone free to do as they like—are alone freemen. This is true in the nature of things ; only they who are on the side of the universe will find the universe on the side of them.

21st April, '84.

. . . Last week was a gay one in Edinburgh, and we were more or less thrown off the lines of use and wont. The occasion was the celebration of the Tercentenary of our University, and it brought together an academic gathering from all quarters of the globe. . . . The ceremony proper began with a grand service in St. Giles', which is now restored, . . . and ended with a grand illumination of Princes Street.

As a member of the University I had tickets sent me admitting to four imposing ceremonial occasions, and I went to three, the chief being that in our largest hall, when honorary degrees were bestowed on a great number of illustrious men, representing army and navy, the church, medicine, arts and sciences, letters and law. Neither Tennyson, nor Ruskin, nor Froude were present, though invited, but I saw Browning, Sir Frederick Leighton, Lowell, Lesseps, Virchow, and Pasteur. The enthusiasm was something refreshing, and I joined in it heart and soul. I have had no such experience as a University man since Carlyle addressed us, and I do not expect to witness the like again. The occasion will, I believe, inaugurate a new era in University training, and bear fruit for many a year to come. The scientific side of things was the one chiefly represented, and the tendency the occasion introduces is likely for a time to be a pre-eminently

scientific one. By a scientific tendency, I mean a tendency to inquire into the nature and reason of things as God has made them, as distinct from a spiritual tendency of which in University circles one as yet sees little sign, which would seek to introduce the spirit of wisdom into the life of man. It is all square, we know, as the sailor said, with God Almighty—it is much out of square with us ; and that is a situation to which science is all too inattentive and has not a word to say. By no searching into the depths can wisdom be found ; to this day, as of old, the depth saith, “It is not in me.” Science does not lead to God, and thither or nowhere is man’s true destiny found ; for from Him and to Him are all things. The question, I mean, is not what is God doing, but what He would have us do ; and the scientific people would seem to think that in answering the former question they are solving the other too.

7th Sept. '84.

. . . This is one of the mischievous results of the gambling system of fortune-making that our lads think they can otherwise than by disciplined industry conjure themselves into wealth, instead of being taught, which they should be, if our occupations were humanised a little, that the disciplined faculty of developing one’s inner being is alone true wealth and alone worth the candle. The men organised to teach our children are wholly

unconscious of the secret, and are themselves utterly destitute of that kind of wealth. They cannot teach work that is worthy of an immortal and will be found entirely pleasant and self-remunerative when taught. And the poor fathers of the children, whose proper duty it is to train them, all their time is spent in procuring mere bread and in paying the heavy tax required to support the monster that rules and teaches for its own behalf. Ah me! all this smites you with amazement, which only grows on you when you see the multitudinous stolidity of a world indifferent to the fact, and living, thinking, and acting as if the accursed social economic were approved of by the gods. Alas! the world is too much for us, and the men who should recognise its antagonism to our best spiritual interests are either blind or callous in presence of the fact. People looking at the spiritual from the side of the world sometimes wonder how the light should shine in it, and so call it God; meseems to people of the upper world, looking down, the astonishment should be, not that the light shineth, but that the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

2nd Nov. '84.

Since I last wrote you I have just managed to get through the two volumes — Froude's *Life of Carlyle in London*—I spoke of, and the accounts they contain have deeply impressed me,

and will leave impressions I shall never forget. To me they seem written to try us and test what manner of people we are. Anyhow, their appearance has a crucial effect, drawing some nearer the subject of them and driving others farther off. The Scotsman, like Voltaire on his death-bed, when Christ's name was mentioned, wanted to hear no more about Him, and even Dr. H., as he told me yesterday, wishes he had not read the book. He finds Carlyle's practice not up to his preaching, and he sorrowfully repudiates both his philosophy and him. My inward thought was, and is—What right has any of us to throw a stone at him? The man's sense of the sin and misery in and about him was deeper and keener than any other man's, and he did not, could not, except in (when he regarded the result) as good as abortive as well as desperate pangs of labour, escape from the crushing weight, and was all his life long a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—the vanity of his own and other men's lives about him, but for the faith he had of his father and mother, like every now and then to drive him to despair. The insight these volumes give into his inner man, so far from bringing him down in my estimate, only, as I told Dr. H., exalt him the more, and I ask myself who ever so felt life's burden and toiled so valiantly under the crushing load. Son of the gods, he, if ever any man, was—"born," as Ruskin once remarked to Froude, "in the clouds, and struck by the

lightning." "Struck by the lightning," repeats Froude; "not meant for happiness, but for other ends."

The demand for perfection in our hero, which seems Dr. H.'s theory, is a very foolish one. All the men whom the heavens send to redeem us, up to Christ Himself, are men so marred. He whom the Christian worships is one who lived and died broken-hearted over the well-nigh invincible darkness and misery in the heart of man. The great majority of people know no more of him than the daily papers choose to tell, and those who write in the "dailies" are people who neither know nor believe in spiritual things. Many are prejudiced in this case merely because of the ruthless way in which Carlyle has cast their favourite idols to the ground. High people in Church and State lying at his feet, not a leg to stand on, only one here and another there to be depended on. This is too drastic a dose for people to swallow; they must some day. Poor creatures, "What a flutter they are in." Let those who believe take comfort, if they can, from the second psalm.

30th Nov. 1884.

The profession J. is now preparing for, and is for four years apprenticed to, is one in which he must prove himself up to a prescribed standard of proficiency before he can be allowed to practise—a rule which should be of universal observance, as it used

to be—no man being allowed to profess what he has not certificate to show he has mastered. That, *at least*, should be required in all provinces of things, and will, when, as must be, the industrial pursuits of the world are organised a little. No man should presume to practise or even preach what he does not know, and if he dares to do so, society should protect itself against him and combine to fetter or gag him—society, when once it is pleased to constitute itself again and become real. Christ even did not presume to preach His new gospel of deliverance till He had sounded the old one and found it wanting, for from a boy we find Him frequenting the Temple of His fathers asking questions of the doctors. In that sphere before any, a man should train himself, if he cannot be trained, to his work, and no one should venture on it without some diploma ; and yet that is a sphere which in these sad times is more infested by incompetents than any other. I could name fellows by the score professing this rôle—that of spiritual teacher—who could not have mastered the details of the most humdrum occupation. Never was the ministry at the altar of the Highest so prostituted as it is now, never such need of the best intellect at command devoted priestlike to spiritual interests. As it is, the world is swarming with people prescribing for our disorders, spiritual and social, but except one or two, I see not any whose prescription is not more or less of the quack order.

22nd March, '85.

Your mother and I were much affected by your last letters, in which you express your great longing to see us all again. It is very pleasing to us to receive such beckonings of affection. I only hope you don't pine too longingly, as it cannot be good for you. I sincerely trust you will not suffer these feelings to prey too much upon you. We are all pretty much as you left us, and our feelings towards you can never change. Distance and time only deepen them on our side as on yours, and the former element especially has opened up depths that you and we otherwise might have never known. We are nearer and dearer by the distance that intervenes. We may not all meet again on this side the time-river, but we will be the same on the other side that we are here. Nay, what is the whole thing, here as well as there, near as well as far, but you a spirit greeting us spirits which, though they may become invisible to sense, are still there—there with more certainty than the floor we stand on? We are to you, and you are to us, spirits from a beyond which is ever over and beneath us, and we make signs to each other of highest things. Happy those of us who can see and feel this, and on the faith of it rise to an assurance of a great over-arching and underlying world, however unseen. . . .

21st April, '85.

I have just returned from a visit to Ecclefechan, which, as you know, is the birth-place and burial-place of Thomas Carlyle. I saw, and left my signature in, the room where he was born, and I stood with bared head before his grave, where he lies within a railed enclosure, his father and mother on his right hand and his brother John on his left, with their feet towards the east. The burial-place is the graveyard of the district for centuries, and many of the tombstones bear his name. The only relic I brought away was a photo of his tombstone, and a daisy, the solitary one of its kind, or indeed flower of any kind that grew on his grave. I spent the better part of a day in the village, a glorious day, the first of the summer, and had my headquarters in Lockerbie, six miles off. I met with no one who had the smallest appreciation of my enthusiasm, or of the greatness of the man who has made the dust under their feet holy ground. They knew nothing of Carlyle himself, only of some of his ancestry, remembered in the district as the fighting masons of Ecclefechan, and a brother, a farmer in the place, of a somewhat surly type. The people about, though of the best breed in the world, are, I find, ignorant, and in the hands of people that can't give them any light.

5th May, '85.

So you distrust Goethe, because you dislike the man. This is a common female prejudice, and I would much recommend you to probe the feeling to the root. In nine cases out of ten it is due to the seeming heartlessness he showed in his connection with ladies, and that he refused loyalty to the promptings of love. I do not know on what your dislike is grounded, but I much fear it is on something of the sort. Goethe's coldness is an offence to most people on the first acquaintance, and is a reason, in the majority of cases, for people spurning him throughout. I hope, however, if such be your feeling, you will not suffer it to prevail over you, both for Goethe's sake and your own. Never, in any soul, did there beam such noble passion, and never was such passion turned to such noble and wise account. Passion, he felt, was there not to bind him but to free and rouse, and he rose on the wings of it to an elevation worthy of a god. Other men are driven by their passions to their ruin—he always stopped short: a higher and nobler beckoning him off. His conduct in this matter can plead the highest examples, and the most original instances you will find among the most sacred names of the earth. These, if you regard them, all have had to show a certain coldness of affection, out of respect to a higher interest, the zeal of which often eats them up. This last, indeed,

was not Goethe's way of it, for he was a *wise* man, and not an enthusiast, but the road to wisdom lay along the same track. He, as a devotee of wisdom, had to wave his "lily" hand to all seduction, and would not suffer himself to be caught in a private trap. It was for man he lived, and not any individual, and he had to be cold to the individual that he might be true to the race. And this he was because he was a strong man, as well as a tender, only the strength in him kept the tenderness in check. He must hold the reins over himself, and not suffer any passion to be his master but to master it. He heard the divine wisdom say—He that loveth any one more than Me is unworthy of Me; and hearing, he became the wisest of all modern men.

17th Nov. '85.

I was through at Glasgow last week, where I met with a namesake with whom I had two long debates on two evenings till early morning. They turned on the pretensions of science, and my denial of, not so much the truth, as the *value* in present circumstances, of the great Darwinian discovery that only the fittest survives in the struggle for existence. I held to my point, and he to his, and we ended, so far as confession of defeat was concerned, pretty much as we began. Be it as you say, I argued with him, that man has come to exist in the way Darwin

alleges; but here he *is*, and the solution of the question of his origin throws no light on the question of his duty, which, now he is here, and in such a welter as he never was in before, is the first and main one. The question of man's origin is a high and great one. Man never was man as a mere creature of circumstances, which is the predicament in which Darwin leaves him, but as the master of circumstances, and the whole history of man is the history *not of evolution, but of resolution*, as it were in the teeth of it. Man is not only earth-born, he is heaven-born, and can no more be reduced to the law under which he has come to exist than the potter's vessel can, by reference to clay and wheel to exclusion of the potter.

1st Dec. '85.

. . . There is much talk of upholding the integrity of the Empire, but there is little appreciation of what its integrity means. It ought to be a question, not of the integrity of its territories, but the integrity of its principles, and that they should be of the same stamp as those of its earlier days, as, for instance, those are mirrored to us in Shakespeare's historical plays. If the right schoolmasters were abroad, *these* are the works with which every schoolboy and girl should be made familiar. England's hope, as a nation, is in maintaining the spirit that breathes in them: of this spirit no purer rendering was ever given,

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or one more calculated to keep alive the memory of it in England's sons. The great Marlborough confesses he knew no more of the history of England than was contained in them, and the heroic figures that Shakespeare painted for him doubtless helped not a little to form his own ideal of an Englishman, and what England had a right to expect of him.

23rd March, '86.

. . . You think you might have benefited more from your walks with me, and reflect that youth is blind. Alas ! so is old age, and if you did not know me, I did not know you in those days as I now do, though I daresay you were then hardly at the stage to take interest in what I could have told you. A premature speaking on such matters is often far more injurious than not speaking at all. There are questions which should never be answered till they are asked, and even then not always. It does not make one happier to regard the world as I am too prone to do, nor does it make one usefuller. Nearly all the people I am on intimate relationship with are people much younger than myself, and I take great pleasure in their company.

15th June, '86.

. . . I am just now attempting to summarise the book of Ecclesiastes, which, though brief, I find to be the most difficult book to understand

in the whole Bible. It is written, no doubt, by a religious man, who is smitten with a deep sense of the vanity of every mortal pursuit, speculation and science included, that is not based on the fear of God, and that does not bear on some practical issue ; but it abounds in a great many dark passages, and it is very difficult to thread the steps of the argument. Unfortunately I can't meet with any one who has found the key to the book, and I cannot be sure whether I am right in assuming that such a clue as satisfies our Western intellect is to be found to it. What I have to execute is a mere summary, and if I fail to give a clear account, I have the satisfaction of doing so with every man who has yet tried it.

8th Aug. '86.

. . . I can well understand how you were left in arrears both as regards letter-writing and reading. As regards the last you lament your shortcomings, but you must not be dismayed at the hundred books. Read Ruskin's criticism on the list, and you will feel relieved a little. The books worth reading are, after all, very few, and of these few, Ruskin's list gives an excellent sample. Never mind what other people are reading ; select your own list, and go on in spite of them. It is a vain thing to be read up in books of which people talk in drawing-rooms and write in journals. As a rule I would advise you to

have nothing to do with such books ; you will find them as vain as the people that talk and write about them. There is not a man with any pretence to education that has read fewer books than I have done, but I have made it a rule never to read a book once that would not repay perusal a second and a third time. I never read a book that I do not get good from, and not one of the books I have read but I could read with profit again and again still. I have read very little fiction, and what fiction I have read with any pleasure is fiction that rests on fact more or less. Fiction has for most part, as Carlyle says, "a fearful affinity to lying," and it is not in that line of things a wise man and a good will be found working. This is Carlyle's challenge, and it is unanswerable : " Will any one tell me that what comes out of the brain of a man is equal or comparable to what comes out, in the shape of fact, from the brain of God Almighty ? " Hence he is ever calling all literary men and artists out of the region of idle fancy into the realm of fact, and his complaint against most of our men of genius—up even to Shakespeare and Goethe—is that they, finding it lighter work, give themselves to fancies of their own, instead of probing the secret of things and illuminating that by the light with which Heaven has inspired them. In regard to Scott, I have said in my short sketch—which I trust you have now got—that his fiction is to a great extent founded on fact ; but then the

serious query after that is, whether it is fact of that kind which it is given to genius to light up for us? There are facts *and* facts, and a wise man will set himself to probe and interpret those which are of most significance to us. Scott, in his genial affection for this and the other human being he had known, has portrayed such in his novels, and it interests us to read about them as it interested him to write about them; but are these the people that it most concerns us, even as Scotch people, to know? There were other facts and forms of being in Scotch history that it had been better for us to be made acquainted with, but then with these Scott had no kinship, and of these consequently he could tell us nothing. There was a divine factor in Scottish history, as in every other, and it is the business of such as he to discover its presence and call attention to it. John Knox and his doings I take to have constituted the divinest events in Scottish history, and the fact of this, and its meaning, Scott was blind to. That gospel of Knox's included in it the Puritanism of England, and the great thing which grew out of it, and Scott not only did not recognise this—he could only jocularly quiz the fact, and question if it was there. Yes, it is truth we want, and a very special kind of truth—the truth that leads us heavenward, and such, be the heavens praised, heaven has here and there revealed to us. The heavens sent Knox to Scotland, and his message was, "Men and Scotchmen—

Time is eternity—take care what you make of it.” To Sir Walter and his readers this message is the same as if it had never been spoken.

19th Sept. '86.

. . . I have been very careful in my account of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes, in which I have given some interesting information. I wrote a short notice of the Publicans to-day, and read up for my notice of the Scribes. The association of the publican with the sinner has suggested reflections, and revived a doctrine which I only half-learned from Emerson years ago, and that is, not to be too hard upon these people, and try and cherish to them some little Christian charity; for they are not nearly such great sinners as we reckon them, being more sinned against than sinning. Other people are more responsible for their state than they themselves are, and should feel they are so. Sin in any one corner of the world is sin in every other, and we have all a hand in it. It is a fact we should all lay to heart, and the one which Christ more especially intended to bring home to us. He felt as no other did that sin lay at no one man's door, but at all men's; that it was a thing not one of us could lay off his own shoulders, that he must take it home as his own—so Christ felt; so should we feel. This is the Christian confession, this the

Christian atonement for sin. This is that just for unjust which reconciles to God.

My object, where I have occasion to refer to the matter of the Bible, is, to bring that within the range of credibility, under the general view, that it is as much a man's book as God's, that, though the inspiration is from heaven, it has passed through the intelligence and the heart of man. The matter of the book I regard indeed as bordering on mystery, but as in itself not otherwise mysterious than as implying a certain degree and range of spiritual experience to make the mysterious plain. The revelation of the Bible is in the intelligence, and is apprehended by the intelligence, and it tells us nothing that is not written on the universal open scroll. The supernatural of which it speaks is *in* the natural ; in other words the whole spiritual world is *here*, and the purpose of Christ is to show that it is *here*. His rebuke is that men won't see the light. The miraculous to us is that men see this light ; to Him it is that men don't see it. What we need is not light, but sight, and Christ makes the power of sight depend on the direction of the eye. "If thine eye be single," &c. His "how is it that ye won't believe ?" were no rebuke, if the revelation were not there. The capital error here is that we expect it to make itself plain to intelligence *merely* ; it develops from the direction of the heart. Its origin in every case is *ab intra*, and never merely *ab extra*. It wells up from within.

29th June, '88.

. . . I was through in Glasgow lately, . . . to study in the Art Collection a portrait of Carlyle by Whistler, which I had only once seen. It represents Carlyle as sitting on a chair against a wall, the figure as well as background being dim and dark, but the face the most touchingly pathetic ever painted, I believe from life, such as the artist could never have conceived had he not seen it. There he sits in entire loneliness, with an expression as much as to say—all I hold dearest has now departed from me; I would I were in the world whither they have all gone. As I sat before it, it drew the tears into my eyes, and I could only relieve myself by turning away.

The wonderful thing about the portrait is the face; none so tenderly touching has been painted from reality since Giotto's Dante—a most tender-hearted soul, looking out upon you under a load of sorrow.

19th Feb. '89.

. . . I was indeed anxious to know what you thought of Matthew Arnold. I knew his ideas were opposed to the teaching of the Church, but I knew also that much of the Church teaching has become questionable, and it seemed to me that his would recommend themselves to you as not unworthy of regard. He has one great idea

which I think worthy of all acceptation, and that is the idea that the foundations of this universe are laid in righteousness and that the end and aim of every divine institution is to establish righteousness in the earth. Whatever makes for righteousness, I understand, he argues is of God. I say "I understand," for I have read very little of his writings myself. The only book of his I have read with any care is his *St. Paul and Protestantism*, and I owe to him my first stable conception of St. Paul's Christianity. He is a literary man, and not a scientific, and it is along literary lines rather than scientific the religious idea is to be traced. So far as he thinks that our knowledge of God is the fruit of our inquiry after Him, I, with you, disagree with him, for the whole history of true religion is God seeking man, and not man seeking God. This is revelation, and only so is inspiration possible in thoughts and actings of any man. It is the core of Calvinism, and of every religion that exalts man to God. And as this is true of man in his relation to God, so it is true of man in his relation to any prophet sent of God. "Ye," says Jesus, "have not chosen Me; but I have chosen you;" and all so chosen feel they are chosen of God. Nor is this true of religion only—it is true of everything that any way elevates man. He never raises himself up; it is always something that raises him. This is the true mysticism in which such a man as Carlyle believes, and such men as

Matthew Arnold do not. The God of the one is what apprehends him, the God of the other is what he apprehends. I don't know what Matthew Arnold's ideas of the fourth gospel are, nor have I even given any very special attention to the question of its origin. It is clearly a gospel quite apart from the other three, and written by one who was not afraid to subject both Christ and His religion to a process of reflection. He does not merely report what Christ said and did, but has a definite conception of who He was and how He stood to His Father in heaven and His own on earth. The other accounts are purely narrative; his is throughout reflective, and bespeaks a mind at once spiritual and philosophical, yet of decidedly Jewish cast. There are many probabilities leading up to the conclusion that he lived subsequent to the apostolic age, but what weighs most with me in inclining me to the opposite conclusion, is that the Epistles which bear the same name and are written in the same style, are obviously of apostolic authorship. Of course, before I can express an opinion on the chapter entitled "The Fourth Gospel from within," I must read it, and I shall ask my friend to lend me his copy of the book that I may do so.

That the writer of the gospel derives the truth from an opening up of the inner spiritual world may be maintained with great plausibility, as also that his conviction of it does not depend on external proof. The resurrection on which he

lays most stress is a spiritual resurrection, and I imagine he would, with Paul, regard the resurrection of Christ unaccompanied by the said spiritual one as naught. But I must read the chapter before I write more. . . . What the Church needs is not an improved service but wise instruction of a nature to direct the thoughts and conduct in daily life. The Episcopal Church, unhappily, does not sufficiently realise this necessity, and the most of her clergy think that their chief office is to lead in worship instead. It seems to me it is not worship so much that the Lord seeks at the hands of His people, as obedience to His commands; and it is Ruskin who says that His honour is nowise dependent on our opinions of Him but on our loyalty to Him, any more than a gardener is dependent on the opinion the sparrows have of his gardening, but would wish much rather they kept at peace among themselves. Of course worship implies more than praising the Lord; it implies confession and petition; but what I imagine pleases Him most is not confession but amendment, and that instead of asking for more grace we should use more wisely and diligently the grace He has already given us. What of worship pleases the Lord best and does us most good is hero-worship, and accordingly we read, "when he bringeth in his first begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him."

25th July, '89.

. . . It is long since I settled down to the conviction that it is only the good which endures in this universe, and that the evil in it dies away long, long before eternity ends. To think otherwise is to deny God, to fail to realise the fact that the author of good and not the author of evil, sits enthroned at the heart of things. The question of the eternity of punishment was once proposed to Carlyle by a friend, and his answer was in keeping with this conclusion. "When you listen," he told her, "to a miscellaneous crowd singing a psalm on the hillside your ear is distressed by the discordant notes on all sides of you; but if you go away to a sufficient distance all these die away and you hear only the ground melody." He employs another illustration in his *Heroes* more pertinent still. "You sow wheat and barn-sweepings in the bosom of the earth, and, when you ask for the return at harvest-time, the good earth-mother gives you return of the wheat, but buries up all the barn-sweepings out of sight." Nay, the human memory is ever fain to leave unremembered everything unpleasant concerning those it loves, and takes pleasure in recalling only what is good and worthy of recollection regarding them. Is it less so, think you, with God?

14th Nov. '89.

. . . The Churches at home have been slowly wakening up to make inquiry into the fruits of missionary labour, and are slowly discovering that, whatever the Scottish missionaries are doing in India, they are not bringing men to Christ. They are doing something among the better-class Hindus of a scholastic and scientific kind, but they are doing next to no properly evangelistic work among any class whatever, high or low. Professor Flint makes a proposal that we should overhaul our missionary methods, and see whether the Churches cannot unite in the adoption and prosecution of a plan for the production of some properly Christian fruit. He desiderates a proper missionary training, and a united effort on the part of all sections of the Church. What I believe is, that all missionary enterprise is vain, until the missionary is sent forth with a more credible gospel, and until we get men to go and become one with the people to whom they may be sent, go among them not as foreigners but as men of their own flesh and blood. But before we can get a gospel that will be credible, we must have a gospel that is spiritual, and does not exact of its recipient anything of questionable account. We here must get out of all this miserable wrangling and squabbling about dogmas and documents, and learn that the whole Christian evangel rests on, and centres in, the

living appropriation and presentation of the Spirit of Christ. Thus only shall we have something to give to the Hindu which he has not already, and except as the bearer of some such gift, it is not likely an intelligent race like the Hindus will accept it with thanks.

18th Feb. '90.

As regards interests outside, which yet concern us most vitally, there were much to say, and one does not know where to begin. In politics and political strife I take little, and never took much, interest, all-absorbing as to many they at present are, though I believe I would take more if politicians were less self-seeking and had the real interests of the community more at heart—those in power, as the Bible has it, a terror to evil-doers and a praise and protection to those that do well. But I do, as you know, take a deep interest in the religious movement, and am in great hopes more may come out of that than agitation for Home Rule. It is gratifying to me to note that the head-centre of this movement is pretty much on this side the border, and that Scotland is once more taking the lead in this department of things. The Scotch intellect and heart seems more open to religious influences than the average English, and it was more from Scotland, or by way of it anyhow, than from the soil, that the great Puritan movement of the seventeenth century in England took its rise. True, there is no John Knox to

the fore now, with whom it all began, but the Scotch mind has still the old intelligent religious susceptibility, and takes a truer heart-interest in religion as the light of life than Englishmen in general do. The religious interest more than any other affects to its depths the Scotch mind.

3rd March, '90.

. . . The strife, however, is mainly a question of history, history of dogmas and history of documents, and the country and the world still wait for the man who can focus results and insist on bringing all our thinkings and actings to the test of these. The thing is to show what Christianity is, or what the truth is, whether so named or not, and what it requires of us: whether or not it requires a revolution in all our life and its economics, as it did when it first announced itself. That seems the one question of the hour, which not a single Churchman, so far as I can hear tell, has essayed to grapple with. The latest version of the Church gospel, which resolves Christianity into mere love, won't do. What we want is life, and not mere love; a gift in hand which love prompts us to bestow, a gift of life in fellowship with the giver of it. That is a substantiality, and not a mere sentiment, as love is. Love without that is utterly hollow and unreal. Christ did not merely love; Christ gave His life, and such life, that He could say, " Except

ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the son of man"—except ye be sharers in My death-life—"ye have no life in you." It is that death-life we want, which the Church has no idea of, which the Church has lost all trace of, and which is at once the root and the back-bone of the gospel of Christ. There is a great lament about non-church-going here just now; and no wonder; and there shall be greater lament ere long. Churchmen must learn to realise the needs of men, and try more wisely to relieve them. They are letting the best people go. It won't do; it won't do.

21st March, '90.

. . . I was interested in your experience of the effects of missionary agency among the natives. The question of the loaves and fishes forms a large element in the success of such work everywhere, and I don't know if the rude mind anywhere in accepting a religion is capable of higher considerations. Indeed, material advantage is the bait that takes all the world over, and considerations of that kind prevail in all sections of society. Materialism is the god of this world wherever you go, and missionaries can only parade material results, while the newspapers have no other proofs to give of the progress of civilisation than the spread of material advantage. It is a question whether the poor people about you are more actuated by considerations of these advantages

than we ourselves are. See how we mope and moan when we lose them, and become utterly wretched. Time was when man stood on his naked manhood ; it seems as if that were possible for him no longer. There was a God in him then ; there remains now little more than the empty hull. This looks a bitter reflection to make, and a pessimistic ; but things will, I have no doubt, mend yet, and man once more become man. Mechanism and machinery will one day cease to be all. This would be my faith in God.

30th April, '91.

You ask me what I think of General Booth and his scheme. Booth is a well-meaning and most able man, of wonderful devotion to an idea, and with great capacities for organisation. If employment was what the poor wanted, it would be more helpful than it is like to be, but they are sunk in idleness, and will only work for indulgence, which he does not offer. The relief of poverty is not the remedy ; it lies deeper ; one must go to the root. Till the social life and system that induce them is altered, enforced beggary and wretchedness will never cease.

It is not at that end, but another, that any social reform must commence. There were poor people in Christ's day, but had He set Himself to relieve them the Christian religion would never have been. He began with the best people

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He could find, at the upper, not the lower, stratum of life ; teaching and preaching what no abject in poverty could either feel or understand. Begin with the best of the people, was the gospel of Carlyle ; it was more than the gospel, it was the very way, of Christ. The people that were gone to the bad were not the class among whom He sought His first followers, but those who He saw felt already the drawing of the Father that sent Him, and who, as alone doing the will of God, could know of the doctrine : simple souls, and single-hearted, and conscious of need. You will never clear out these slums by any draining of them ; you must by wise, even compulsory, methods stop the supply. People who are down there, you will never drag up ; you must strain your utmost to hold others back. Prevention is not only better than, it is the only, cure in cases of that kind.

This is one objection I have to Booth's scheme, but there are others, weightier still. One point of weakness Booth virtually confesses to, when he arbitrarily insists on magnifying the whole organisation himself ; it is a virtual confession that without the man the method is nought. That is a difficulty which I don't know how he will surmount, and so far as one can see, whenever he goes the whole enterprise will go to wreck. But the truth is, no organisation will save the world in any section of it, and this, all the great men from Jesus downward, who have attempted

to save it, have seen. All the regenerators of the race have not only begun with the best material they could lay hands on, but have considered their task finished when they raised that to their own level, and left in that a leaven which might permeate the mass. Not one of them even founded a Church; that, with the spirit they inspired, might be left to form itself—organisation would follow of itself, no living organisation being possible otherwise.

29th Aug. '91.

. . . I have just finished reading a long speech by Principal Rainy. It was in the interest of union among the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, and in advocacy of disestablishment as the only basis on which it could rest. The masterly manner in which he argued the point was admirable, and the temper in which he conducted it was worthy of the man you used so to admire. He is, in my esteem, head and shoulders above all the other members of the Assembly now sitting, and has been the leading spirit, as well as chief speaker, in all the questions before it. My only regret is, and I believe it is his too, that he is too much involved in mere ecclesiastical quarrels to devote his singular abilities to more urgent matters, and that he is so entangled in this petty strife that he cannot tear himself away. He knows well that when all the questions he is discussing are settled, even as they should be, nothing is achieved

for the true emancipation of the Church and country which he and the like of him are there to essay. The result aimed at, if obtained, would be only mechanical, whereas the first question before the Church and country is not one of mere arrangement or the relation between Church and State or Church and Church, but the vital essence of the Christian faith itself. The startling fact is that the interest of the people in the teaching of the Church is gradually waning, and it does not occur to any Churchman to ask if the cause of this is not in the Church itself. Some, indeed, of the Established Church vainly fancy that the falling away is due to the baldness of the Church service, and are vainly hoping to bring the people back by the introduction of an exploded ritual, not seeing, or even dreaming, that with true spiritual life as good as extinct among us, that is only to make bad worse. No improvement of the ritual, any more than the union of Churches, will avail to revive a single spark of the Christian religion—only the quickening of that religion in here and there a living heart, a living faith in its essential spirit. No machinery, however smooth its action, however far-reaching, or however artistic its effect, will ever serve as a substitute for the light of life. What is that light is the one question, and the one business of the Church is so before all to hold that forth that men may feel it the all in all of daily life. There is no Christianity that is not an inward fact, and

no Church but a fellowship among those in whose hearts its life-fire has been kindled. Relation between Church and State, and Church and Church, is of no interest whatever compared with that, and of no interest to any one who ranks that first. The question of questions to me at the present time is—What is Christianity itself ? and the one thing to do when we have settled that is to preach it aloud on the highways as a choice between very life and very death.

5th Feb. '92.

. . . Nothing so draws out human affection as a human personality, and to snatch it away from our embraces were otherwise the cruellest cruelty in man's lot. This feeling deepens in one, as one grows older, and the death, or even departure, of a loved one darkens and deadens every other interest one has in life. Solemn, solemn is death, and indeed all parting ; and human, human is the pathos of that story in the Acts, when Paul's disciples on the sea-beach gave themselves up to weeping as he parted from them at the thought of seeing his face no more.

SOME LETTERS TO A SON ABROAD

3rd Dec. '96.

. . . To-day a friend looked in, and we got on Socialism — it was Evolution before — and I broached an idea which rather startled him, for we had never talked on Socialism before, and he did not know that I had any sympathy with the movement, little love as I have in general for the socialist class. The question I started was the right of any one to claim private property on the land of the globe, and I maintained that no man had any right to any of it except such as he could exploit and did exploit for the service of its inhabitants. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness of it, and none but His, and only such sons of His, as bring out of it such virtue as lies in it for the benefit of His creatures. That is a postulate of Socialism, and it is backed up by such justice-loving men as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin. He acceded to my doctrine to some extent, but he challenged me to say how then I would dispose of the land ; my answer to which was, that the first thing in regard to any wrong

was to point out that it was wrong, otherwise no one would move a finger to put it right. The right adjustment is matter for long and deliberate consideration together of the wisest heads. The collective body of the class called socialists, I admitted, are unequal to the feat.

24th Jan. '97.

I confess to you I have always felt a great respect for Froude in connection with Carlyle, and have often been disposed to thank Heaven that Carlyle's manuscripts did not fall into other hands. He seems to me, according to my present lights, to have done his duty by Carlyle, and I am blind to anything he has written in trespass of the documents that lay by him. True, he is not a Carlylean as you and I may be, and he does not profess Carlylism ; he is to a great extent an outsider, but as far as I yet know he has set down naught in malice. He has, I cannot help thinking, been unduly dealt with, and I am disposed to honour him as a martyr to the memory of the man he revered, as truly as, and more so perhaps than, any of us do ; he had meant to honour Carlyle, and friend and foe alike raised a hue and cry against him that he had done Carlyle's memory everlasting dishonour. Do you know that remarkable outburst of Ruskin ? It is in the dedication of *Munera Pulveris*. "I would," he says, "that some better means were

in my power of showing reverence to the man who, of all our masters of literature, has written, without thought of himself, what he knew it to be needful for the people of his time to hear, if the will to hear were in them, whom, therefore, as the time draws near (1871), when his task must be ended, republican and free-thoughted England assaults with impatient reproach, and out of the abyss of her cowardice in policy and dishonour in trade, sets the hacks of her literature to speak evil, grateful to her ears, of the solitary teacher who has asked her to be brave for the help of man and just for the love of God." This passage, I think, explains the attitude of the press to Carlyle, and it has seemed to me to explain pretty much the attitude of all and sundry to Froude. Carlyle's enemies raised a shout of jubilation over the *Reminiscences*, and Carlyle's admirers meekly hung down their heads ashamed. I remember the publication of the *Reminiscences* well, and the pride I felt in them, though, in my own small circle, I stood alone in defence. You Carlyleans! I would say—ye are no true Carlyleans. If you had, as you profess, known Carlyle the writer, you never could have expected Carlyle the man to have been other than in Froude's pages you find him. But I await your disclosure, and will be glad to be set right if I have construed matters wrongly.

However, Froude after all is not my concern; it is Carlyle—not even Carlyle the writer or

Carlyle the man, but the over-soul in him, what you understand by Carlyle's *dæmon*. Body, soul, and spirit in him indeed are one, as in the unity of every man, but it is from the pneuma or spirit that the other two are derived, and by the pneuma or spirit that the other two are intelligible. You know the passage in *Sartor*: "Wilt thou know a man by stringing together what thou namest facts? the man is the spirit he worked in, not what he did but what he became." And Goethe says much the same thing: "What have I to do with externals, when the spirit is my concern?"

This is my conviction: Carlyle is defensible, not from the outside but from within; and the vulgar world, having no eye for the latter, insists on measuring him by the former, and so dismisses him.

28th Jan. 1897.

. . . My friend asked me some time ago how I would define the difference between wisdom and knowledge, for we both agreed that the distinction was immense. Knowledge is indiscriminate, I said, but wisdom is essentially discriminate, and has an inborn power to distinguish the knowledge that is of vital avail and the knowledge that is not, the knowledge that you can weave into your own thoughts and affections, and the knowledge that you cannot, the know-

ledge that you can lay to heart and the knowledge that you cannot. To that latter class belongs the knowledge of evolution, and my contention in regard to it was this: There's nothing in it and nothing to be got out of it, or rather worse than nothing, as the longer you think of it and study it, you are led farther off your proper beat. We may have been slugs at one time, and we may be angels at another time, says Ruskin, but we are men now, have now the form of men, and must do the duties of men, leaving past and future in the Maker's hands. Nay, what of the past, what of the future, asks Carlyle; the whole past and the whole future is *here*, for is not God, in whom past and future meet, *here*. For you and me the idea, the faith, that God is here, is enough; and our whole duty is this, to hear His voice, and do His will here and now. Don't, therefore, I advise you, trouble your head about evolution. It is nothing to you, it is nothing to me. Evolution explains nothing without God, and without God evolution is atheistic. How absurd to say that man grew out of the oyster; man never could come out of the oyster had not the oyster come out of him. That which comes out at the end *was from the beginning*. You can't find out endings from beginnings, and beginnings you can only know from endings. This sweeps away the whole interest in evolution for me.

25th Feb. '97.

. . . Socialism is a subject that interests me very deeply, and naturally as a believer in Christ, and believer in Carlyle, both of whom represent life as founded on society and community; and it depends upon whether the life-breath of society is from above or below, whether the members of it are bound heavenward or hellward. So that for me Socialism is nothing that does not ground itself in a community of divine life; and that unhappily is not the kind of Socialism that pleads for itself in the present century. My Socialism is the Socialism of Christ and Carlyle, and that is a Socialism among men individually regenerate, men born of the spirit and living in the spirit of the one and the other. Both Christ and Carlyle despair of the Socialism that does not begin and end with the reformation of the individual, to insist on which and to bring about which is the function proper of the Christian ministry. Many of the doctrines of the socialists, such as the one you quote to me, are just, and what I mean to say in their regard is, that you must get just men to work them, and love for justice and the practice of justice is the only possible solid basis of any possible human economy, of a sound state of human society.

. . . There is one thing I would not have you think much and even at all of, and that is your shortcomings. Meditation on these is not pro-

fitable, and is apt to become morbid. I never think of my shortcomings, and I never exhorted any one to think of theirs. In everything one should forget the things behind, and press on to the things before ; and even to the woman arraigned before Him for adultery, Christ said, " Go, and sin no more."

I am very much pleased with the course of reading you have adopted . . . Carlyle's *French Revolution* is a stupendous book, and it needs almost the soul of a Dante to sound the depths of it. The reading of it, however, will do you good, a great good, in this way—it will give you a glimmering, if nothing more, of the depths worthy of sounding that are in Carlyle.

26th March, '97.

. . . I am very much touched to think you are practising for me a favourite Scotch melody against your coming home, and specially pleased that you have taken to Scotch songs. My interest in them is due a good deal, I fancy, to association ; yet I cannot help thinking that there is more heart and true feeling in them than many, indeed any, other melodies I hear. Of course there are higher flights of the poetic muse than can be rendered in song, and music has correspondingly a range to which no song melody can aspire. Music has, I understand, a power of expression such as no other vehicle of utterance

man possesses has, and I am sometimes overborne by people who take up that high ground against literature; but I have again and again found that literature gives me tidings of things of which many high-flying musical people have no knowledge whatever, or even capacity of knowing, and I am often driven by their cries more and more on the great ground principle of spiritual illumination contained in John i. ver. 1,—“In the beginning was the *Word*,” &c. Music speaks of high things and deep things, but it is the voice of wisdom in a definite word or definite act that is profitable to direct. Carlyle says of the *Marseillaise* hymn: “Luckiest musical composition ever promulgated, the sound of which will make the blood tingle in men’s veins, and whole armies and assemblages will sing it with eyes weeping and burning, with hearts defiant of death, despot, and devil.” This, in my regard, well expresses the proper function of music, which is to awaken and keep alive in the soul the noble passions that should always actuate it; but something else is required to *enlighten* the soul as to the true and wise direction of its affections. The dark-browed mass, 500 men from Marseilles, that originally marched to that strain, were all aflame with the passion it expresses, but which one of the mass had other than the most mistaken idea of the despot and devil they gave their lives away in defiance of? Not one: the whole thing went up in smoke, as rehearsal after rehearsal of it

has since done; and the French Revolution itself, of which that march was an incident, has done little else than pave the way for a new devil and new despot more formidable than any man has yet had to grapple with. All this, while I would not for the world you gave up the study of music for which you have such faculty, will, I hope, fortify you in the determination you have come to in regard to literature, and to give time to reading. Not that that, any more than music, is the end of life, but rather the translation into your life and character of the spirit that *breathes* through the one and the soul that *speaks* through the other.

8th April, '97.

. . . The six volumes of Carlyle sent will serve you for reading for months to come, and you need not expect to understand them fully at the first or second or even final reading. It will be slow work, but by patient perseverance you will by degrees enter on an inheritance such as no writer of the century has bequeathed to the Saxon race. The first volume, unhappily, is the most difficult to understand, and perhaps you had better hold it over a little and start with the *Heroes*, going carefully over them first, and then the *French Revolution*.

. . . I may also add as regards Carlyle's style, you need not expect to understand even his very words as he uses them at a first reading, and that

the full meaning of them will grow upon you the more you read, so don't halt too long over a word; it will often become clear to you as you read and read, and not otherwise. The common ones he uses are often in a different sense from the ordinary. You will be surprised that he says so little of Christianity. The reason I believe is, the word is one thing in most people's minds and a different thing in his; and I may tell you I never, till I read and studied *Sartor*, knew what Christianity was; and I am persuaded if other people read and studied it as I have done, they would make the same surprising discovery. Believe me, Christianity is not the simple thing many people take it to be, and to persuade people that it is, is clearly to misunderstand it, and is entirely in the teeth of the Founder of it, when He said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few find it." It was only after a life-long wrestle that it dawned upon Carlyle amid flashes of lightning and peals of thunder which shook a whole world to its foundations and burned it up. *Sartor Resartus* tells this story, and whoso reads it without seeing this, reads it not. He was born amid conflagrations of old things, and he was scarred with the marks of the burning more or less to the end of his days, the battle-marks visible on his brow to the last. No literary man of the period has come through an experience like this, and his reward at the hands of an ungrateful country is the reward

that has been meted out to every servant of the Most High that has done and suffered the like. "He hath no form nor comeliness that men should desire Him" (Isa. liii.), a chapter which forecasts the treatment which every servant of God may expect at the hands of a world such as this.

20th April, '97

. . . I have your long and interesting letter of 17th March, and I hasten to reply to it as there are matters of importance in it on which I would like you to have my advice. I am greatly pleased to learn that you are deriving benefit from Mr. I—'s ministrations, and that on the primary matter he is shedding not a little light for you. I refer to the doctrine of the Spirit's work in the New Birth, or the New Nature as you say he calls it. The doctrine of the New Birth is no doubt one of the radical doctrines of the Christian system, and it is the truth of truths that except a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God; but the doctrine or the truth is one thing and the fact is quite another thing, and a man may be born again though he knows nothing of the doctrine or the theory of its origin. And a man is born again when he says nay to the spirit of the world, and yea to the Spirit of God, and he cannot say nay to the world's spirit till he knows what the world's spirit is, or yea to God's Spirit till he knows

what God's Spirit is, for there are many men who say nay to the former and yet stop short at saying yea to the latter, and very many who say yea to the latter and not nay to the former, and no man who does not do both is born again. This is the essential matter, and all teaching as to how this state of mind is produced and what influences it is of secondary account. Take for granted, if a man has wakened up to a sense of his manhood it is God that does it, and if light is shed on his footpath it is God that sheds it; but the great thing is to see the light and walk in it, and speculate neither upon whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. Light is given us not that we may question it, but to show the road, not this way but that.

It is not required of us that before we start on the Christian race we should know all the roads that are right and all the roads that are wrong—enough to know that this particular is a right one and not that, and that if we pursue that road steadily it will clear up and widen our whole path. We need no new religion, pleads Thomas Carlyle; we know more than we practise; “there are ten commandments you know for one you do; try one of them: the rest will become natural and easy for you to do.” When you learn to read *Sartor*, you will know what this new birth is better than by any dissertation bearing upon the author of it or the manner. What the new birth is in Teufelsdröckh's experi-

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ence you will find explained in chaps. vii., viii. and ix. I quite agree with you there is no accounting for the spiritual; but it is highly necessary you should know what the spiritual is. I think a great many people err in regard to the teaching of the Spirit, and one great source of error is that they look upon the Spirit as a divine person working *from without*, whereas the Spirit is a divine power working *from within*; and a great many people don't know that the great difference spiritually between one man and another is that some are susceptible of this influence, and some not, some so dead that no power in heaven and earth can waken them up (see Matt. xxiii. 37; I would, but ye would not). I would press upon you most urgently not to make your spiritual state matter of any, even the smallest concern, but simply to do the right and shame the devil. How the Spirit works is no concern of ours, but what the Spirit says; and it was a wise advice Dr. Chalmers gave his students, not to dwell on the processes but the great truths of Revelation as revealed to faith.

I am greatly gratified with your appreciation of Burns, and I take that as an omen that you are not likely to entertain too narrow views of spiritual religion. I quite approve of all you say of him and his songs. I don't know if you have read Carlyle on Burns, but if you have not, you should read it at once. Garnett says of that essay: "This essay, saved as by fire (it was written for

the *Edinburgh Review*, and the editor was about to present it in a mutilated shape) is the very voice of Scotland, expressive of all her passionate love and tragic sorrow for her darling son. It has paragraphs of massy gold capable of being beaten out into volumes, as indeed, they have been." Nothing written on Burns since, equals that essay.

You will by this time have got my paper on Scott. You will see I do not put *Kenilworth* as high as you do ; and I have followed Ruskin's estimate, who is probably our highest authority on Scott. You may see occasion to alter your judgment on Scott as well as on many others as years go on, and, while I would not damp your enthusiasm for anything, I would advise you always to keep your mind open and be ready for more light which time may bring. You are quite right ; it is not only a matter of gratitude that God has sent wise men into the world to teach us, it is equally so that He has endowed us with a sense to discern their worth and wisdom, and indeed our greatest misfortune is to have light given us and to want eyesight to see it. Accordingly, it is not light we have to pray for but sight, that our eyes may be opened.

31st May, 1897.

. . . I note your letter bears principally on Christian professors and the incongruity between their profession and practice, and echoes a very

widespread complaint. It is as old as the days of Christ, and older, and one which can only be met by consistency in oneself. Christianity is not the less true and the less deserving of confession that so many counterfeit it, and indeed the fact that men affect to believe it when they don't is a homage to it. It is right and proper in you to require that a Christian should be a Christian, and to disclaim all connection with those who profess and do not. But in no association of men will you not find men false to what they profess, and there is no religion under the sun in the profession of which you will not find men of all "*degrees of worth and worthlessness,*" and while the men of worth may be to the credit of it, the men of no worth are not to the discredit of it. Moreover, you must remark the Christian religion is of a very high order, and very few men, though they strive honestly to conform to it, can attain to the level of it, and the challenge of Emerson is not without warrant, when he says, in Greece every Stoic was a Stoic, but in Christendom where is the Christian? Only, the people you refer to are short of the very elements, and are wanting not only in Christian principle, but in the common honesty which is the basis not only of religion but of common virtue. However, there is this plea in their behalf—you cannot get on in the world if you don't conform to it, and the worship of Mammon does not admit of the worship of God. All these people are worshippers of Mammon,

and they find if the god Mammon is to help them they must cloak the worship of him with that of God. The Christian profession is necessary to get on—that is the whole of it, and all they care for is to get on. I don't wonder at your admiration of Burns's honesty in contrast with the general dishonesty. Sincerity is the charm of Burns, and it is for that—his naturalness—all honour him. He affects nothing, and is as incapable of affectation as the skylark when it sings its notes of joy in the sky, and is as full of rapture—all song from head to heel. Sincerity, too, is Carlyle's first commandment, and only in sincerity, he insists, can a man live and move and have *a being*. His John Knox is great and heroic simply because he is sincere. Some people complain that sincerity is not enough, but till one be honest he can think and do no good thing; a man's whole heart must be in a thing before any good can come of it. . . .

Matters in the Old Kirk are in a dubious way, and not one man in it seems to see what things are drifting to. One section seems to think if they improve the church service all will be well, and another, that what the Church wants is greater latitude of thinking. But the truth is, what men need is *wisdom profitable to direct*, and that cannot be got either from a widening of the creed or an improvement of the ritual. "The excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (Eccles. vii. 12).

Intelligent people, I find, are at present divided

into two classes : those who say, with the evolutionists, let things alone and they will come all right by-and-by, and those who see things going to the devil, and that the clear course for every man is to start to his feet, seize him by the throat and throttle him. With this latter class are all my sympathies, and I were no Carlylean if they were not, but this class is divided into two camps, the Stoic and the Christian : the Stoic says to the devil, You won't have me for your slave; and the Christian adds, Nor my brother either. "God help it," is a godless maxim ; "We must help him to help it," expresses the resolution of a godly man. Unhappily, the help many offer is no help at all, and the only help of any kind which one can render another is by teaching him to help himself. The man that teaches you to lean, teaches no true gospel ; the Cross is not a thing to lean on, but a thing to carry, which a man can learn to carry by the power of the Spirit of God. This is the true doctrine of the Cross, and yet it is a view of it which I never heard preached from a Christian pulpit. It is always, Christ was crucified for you, when it is, Be ye crucified with Him. Think of this ; you will find something in it. Christendom is far from Christ, and that the professors of it are not true is the rule, and not the exception. A friend of mine once said to me, " You should leave the Church when you don't believe what the Church teaches —you are in a false position." " I would be in a

falsers," I said, "if I left it ; I would be taken for an infidel, and I am no infidel, and I won't cease to profess Christ, however much I may prove unworthy of Him." The false worshippers have no right to assume the power to exclude the true ; and if they do they are the persecutors, and it is not they but the persecuted that carry away the blessing.

30th Sept. '97.

. . . As a counteractive, I take to a little stiff reading in the evening, and the book I have gone to is the *French Revolution*, every syllable of which is conceived in the utmost tension of thought and imagination. For the writer has penetrated to the very heart of everything, and has held it before his imagination till its secret should become as clear to his reader as himself. One is always reminded of the "thirsty, portrait-painting" eyes, which Emerson ascribes to him. There is no chain of reasoning, simply a succession of paintings, but paintings of things which it takes eyes to see, and revealed in tones which it takes ears to hear. The universe is not a thing he thinks out as a philosopher does, but a thing to look at as a poet does, and to report the meaning or behest of as a prophet does ; everything in it is to him a word with a meaning, and he rests not till he finds the meaning out. It is ever, What saith the Lord ? and his mission is to announce that to whoso has ears to hear. He

does not stop with looking, he presses on to revealing what he finds it well all should lay to heart. And his sorrow is that so few have ears and no one is found to believe his report. This was the case with the Hebrew prophets too, and if ever Christ gives way to any outburst of joy, it is when a disciple catches up even imperfectly any word He said to him. You know the story of Mahomet and Kadijah (it is given in *Heroes*), and his unbounded gratitude to her for believing his word when no one else did. A lot of people want to be sure about truth, and some accept the Pope's word for true and some the Bible, but the only restful assurance is the voice of God in a man's heart, and still more when that echoes itself in another and another heart, according to a saying oft quoted by Carlyle—one's faith becomes transcendent and triumphant when another says "yea" to it. That is the reason of the existence of a Church, that one may back up another in the assurance of his faith. The echo often serves the devil's cause; it is no less helpful in the cause of God. And there are people whose ditto is the ditto, as it were, of an angel from heaven, and by the help of which a man can face and overcome whole legions of adversaries. It is deep answering to deep.

So much of an epistle I send you this mail, and I hope it may profit you. It lays bare one or two thoughts which steady me in this wild welter of things in which so many toss to their

doom. "A man's a man for a' that," as Burns saw in his wild way.

2nd Dec. '97.

. . . In regard to weighing Burns and Scott against each other, I would advise you to abstain from doing so at your present stage, and, indeed, in assaying the relative worth as yet of any such men. Take any inspiration you can get out of them, and leave all criticism of them alone. You are not yet adequate to do so, and I don't know if one is at any time called to do so. Still, in relation to these two, I will tell you what I think. Burns had by nature in him what Scott never gave sign of—he had fire, the thing the world wants, and Scott had none, only with Burns it was hardly ever concentrated on what it was given him for. There was a great deal to burn up in Burns's own inner man before he could in anywise collect himself into an ethereal power, and act on mankind as fire to smelt out the dross in them and kindle pure flame. The animal was too much for the man, and it bore the man away with it. But yet, as I say, judging so of him and Scott is no question of any vital worth; ours is to catch up whatever inspiration may be in either and pass on to other men the divine fire.

SOME LETTERS TO A FRIEND IN THIS COUNTRY

5th April, 1891.

You will be pleased to know that I have at length found time to look into Blake, and to learn with what result. It was only the second volume of Gilchrist's *Life* I asked my friend to lend me, and only into it that I have looked, but with the result that I am led to take the deepest interest in his views of things, and to conceive the highest opinion of both himself and them.

He is, I find, a man of deep and true insights, and I conceive of him as one of the elect seers of the race. His point of view commends itself to me as the true one, and I am ready to subscribe to nearly all he says. One dominant thought of his is a great favourite with Goethe, and it is that everything wise has already found utterance, and that all we have got to do is to lay it well to heart. To that I assent with my whole soul, and I see nothing thought or done now that has not been a thousand times better done by the wise men of the past. Another thought very precious to him is that,

in spite of all our speculations and science, God has drawn a veil over the mystery of being which it is given to neither man nor angel to lift. That too I believe, and all that philosophy and science can do is to shift the problem of being, but by no means to solve it or open its secret to the sight. Still another is a favourite one with Ruskin, and which he expresses when, in answer to the transcendentalists of philosophy or theosophy and the descendantists of science, he insists that, though we may once have been slugs and may one day be angels, we should be content to know we are men now, and be content to think the thoughts and do the work of men. This is exactly Blake's thought, as I take it, when he would turn us away from the "mole" on the one hand and the "eagle" on the other, and bids us be considerate of the wisdom that properly belongs to our own race, and is congruous with our own proper nature.

3rd Sept. 1891.

I should have acknowledged your last with its enclosure sooner, but pressure of work prevented, as well as the delicacy of the topic submitted. This last is one for which I have no relish, and I confess to not a little impatience whenever it turns up. It is calculated, and is often intended, to turn us away from the main interest, and is thrust in your face by people who are incapable of appreciating the meaning of Carlyle's life and

worth. What have we to do with the relations between him and his wife? And what has that to do with the truth or falsehood of his message to us? A man of his stamp is not a man that can always be on the smoothest terms with other people, and to fulfil his destiny he needs must isolate himself more and more. His wife herself never so much as saw into the secret sanctuary of his being, never had experience of that purgatorial fire through which his soul passed. His, too, was a Dantean nature withal, and "Dante," as Emerson says, "was very bad company, and was never invited to a dinner." Carlyle was not bad company, but the best of company, still in his soul-life he had no proper companion, and his wife and he in that respect lived apart. Well for her that she did not marry him for love; she could not, no woman could, so mate herself with such a man. I question if any other woman could have been found who could have proved such helpmate to him. Helpmate he needed, and she was that one. Lived miserably together! Sheer cant and nonsense. The relation between the two was entirely human; two such people could not have lived more happily together than they did.

1st Dec. 1892.

I was very pleased to have your note the other evening, as I have been often wishing to have a line from you. The lines you send—

" Ah ! what a dusty answer gets the Soul,
When hot for certainties in this our Life " ¹—

I quite appreciate, though I would not consider them exactly to the taste of a fastidious critic. Yes, how many of us hunt after certainty in matters where Heaven has allowed us to have none, and insist on battering at doors which the fates have inexorably closed against the assaults of all mortals. It is a thought which has been often on my mind of late, and what presses it upon me is the publication of so many books at present on points on which the heavens have given, and plainly mean to give, *us* no answer. The remark applies to all the theological literature of the time, and indeed to all the theology of any time, all of which is a vain effort to, as Goethe has it, jump off your shadow, and to get beyond a sphere you are confined within. We are "*in* the centre of immensities and the conflux of eternities," as Carlyle phrases it, and we are not content with the knowledge of which we have enough, of how to orient ourselves within these limits, but must struggle incessantly to get beyond. Our Christian religion has been sadly vitiated by this tendency, and its professors have for centuries back turned the whole thing upside down. The Christian religion is not, as the Church has for long insisted, to teach the way man has to get into heaven but the way the

¹ George Meredith.

heaven has taken to get into man; and its central fact is the incarnation or the finiting of the Divine *within* the limits I have referred to, and which have been ordained from the beginning as the proper sphere of man. All this is familiar to Goethe and Hegel and Carlyle, but theologians don't read the writings of these men, and they won't be persuaded to take off their spectacles and see that this is the teaching of the Bible from the days of Moses to the days of Christ.

27th May, '93.

As I have said, I have had very little of any interest to do of late, but I have not been living altogether without reflection on things about me. This is a time here when the ecclesiastical world is on the move, and engaged in consultation on its condition and doings. And what the ecclesiastical world is about, is always a matter of deep interest to me, and I am always alive to any movement in it.

The functionaries of it have charged themselves with the direction of the highest interests of the world, and these are interests which my mind has been most occupied with. There is no other body of men who profess to take these in hand, and I am greatly concerned to notice how they (ecclesiastics) regard them, and whether or not they are furthering them. Of late they have not regarded those interests very wisely or done

much to promote them, but I think I see signs now that they are wakening up to their trust, and are becoming alive to the obligations that trust has imposed on them. They are beginning to feel that the Church is not an end, but a means to an end, and that the people are not there for the Church's sake but the Church for the people's. They are beginning also, I think, to read their charter better, and are learning to look more exclusively at that portion of it which comes direct from the hands of the Master. The words of Christ Himself are beginning to have the authority that of right belongs to them. The Church is now at length beginning to see that the whole of Christianity, as a spiritual system, is given in Christ's own teaching . . . to found either in its purity, we must go to the fountain head.

Accordingly that is what I find—as you will if you look into the *Contemporary Review* for this month—one of the foremost theologians of the day is calling upon the Church to do; and an old college friend of mine on the *Review* is backing him up in his appeal. Only both of them, I fear, are referring to the teachings of Christ with a view to merely theological issues and to subordinate these to the solution of merely theological problems. Christ, indeed, has His own theology, but His is not what is meant by theology in the hands of the clergy. Their theology is nothing better than metaphysics founded on the authority of so-called revelation, whereas His theology

is the theology of One whose knowledge of God is a reflection of His life in Him. Christ's system is a purely spiritual system, and His aim was not to teach theology, but to quicken and keep alive in others such a divine Spirit of life as was in Himself. His aim was not speculation, but life ; not speculation, which ever vainly strives to compass the infinite, but life, which is finite, and is only life as finite ; the more divine, the more it confines itself within the limits, which are never the same but different for every human being.

20th June, 1893.

I find I have forgotten to refer to the extracts from Bacon which you were good enough to send me. I did appreciate them, and I remarked that I had in my quotation book adopted nearly all of them. As for Ruskin's obligations to Bacon in his teaching, though I have not remarked the special dependence of the one on the other, I should say the teaching of the two men must have been intimately related ; and one great function of Ruskin as a teacher is professedly to recall us to the wisdom that was preached in the world before him : and Bacon, of all our wise men, is a collector of ancient wisdom.

22nd Jan. 1893.

. . . This is a dull Sunday evening, and I must try and enliven it by a little talk with you. In

your last, you said you were busy with Borrow, and I was thrown back in memory to days when Borrow interested me. I had forgotten all about him, but I well remember the impression the reading of him made on me. It was at a time when I was breaking away from the old proprieties, and the reading of him seemed to let in upon me a breeze of the free, fresh air. It is a long journey since then, and there have been many windings in the path, and much wandering with weary foot—paths which I shall never travel again—guided along—or misguided, was it?—by now this star, now that, all sunk for ever below the horizon of my sky.

Apropos of reading, then, I am at an interesting book just now, and I don't know if we have had any correspondence on it. It is one of Ruskin's, entitled *Unto this Last*. I have read it before once and again, but I never till this last reading saw into the value of it till now. It is written in a style in which every word weighs, and the full meaning of it cannot be grasped without the careful weighing of every one of them. Just the book for a careful reader like you, and which most people toss aside because they are not trained to carefully written books, and the press does not offer them books of that class to read. And not only does every word answer to an idea, but word bears relation to word, as stone to stone in a work of architecture, while the subject itself is of the most vital im-

portance, and is nothing less than the essential structure of a living society, a statement and vindication of the laws that ought to bind human beings to one another, while it opens up under ground and beneath our feet, and around us, an abyss of mal-arrangement between man and man and interest and interest, that may well wake us up to ask ourselves some questions about the solution of which we are fatally heedless. In a recent letter, I signified my indifference to politics and political people, and if you read that book as I do, I think you will see the reason. Political people and political measures should show some sense of the situation opened up to us there, and they show not only an insensibility to it, but take for granted they rest on a solid immovable base. The ground is hollow and they don't know it, and they are exactly the people who ought to know before they assume the guidance of the nation. It is the rarest thing in the world for one of them to make the discovery, as Laurence Oliphant did, of the anomaly of that position—not one Pilate among them in the crucifixion of the Christ now going on to stand up and, not in jest but in earnest, wash his hands of it, and say solemnly to the democracy, "See *you* to it," i.e., that blood be on you.

6th Jan. 1901.

I am afraid I am as strongly prejudiced against Huxley's science as against Browning's

poetry, and have as little "inclination" to read his Life as you confess to when you took it up. I am ready to concede to him all his merits as a man and a writer, but I cannot away with his science, which is, and that confessedly, "without God and without hope in the world." I once took to him for a saying of his in an article written years ago on Descartes: "If any man would tell me what I ought to think and do I would barter my freedom to-morrow." I thought that a brave speech, and a manly, but I soon found out it was a sceptical, and the reflex of an assurance that no such man could be found. Huxley is to the backbone a materialist, and it is not inconsistent with his creed as such that he should prove a good father and a good friend —rather is he prone to show himself such to make amends for the gloomy sadness of his creed.

All the French materialists of the eighteenth century, to whom he was spiritually related, were of the same stamp, from Helvetius, the father of them, down through Scottish David Hume, of both of whom it has been said they were of estimable character and kindly disposition. I have seen Huxley more than once, and he gave me the impression of a very self-confident man. I am familiar with his relation to Carlyle and with Carlyle's relation to him, but I cannot help thinking he mistook what that relation was. Science has made huge strides since the eighteenth

century, but the men of science as such of the nineteenth are spiritually where their predecessors were, if they have not rather lapsed rearward. The eighteenth-century scientist had a God somewhere — the “absentee” God — but the modern finds no God anywhere either present or absentee. Spiritually, with all his scientific pretensions, Huxley was a man of the eighteenth century, pronounced by Carlyle one of the most godless since centuries began. As such he was the mortal foe of all superstition, and of all institutions that fostered it, but when he has hunted it down, what has he put in its stead? Superstition, in spite of all his archery, is *there*, and refuses to go, except in the presence of the spiritual, which he ignores and from which, when it reawakens, superstition will shrink away as ghosts do at the cock-crowing. There is *nothing worth anything in this universe that is not spirit*; this is the first and last lesson of *Sartor*; but it appears whatever *Sartor* taught Huxley, it never taught him this, though, as you point out, he traces his first awakening to that book.

Believe me, there are thousands of Carlyle-worshippers who have profited no more from Carlyle's teaching than he did. If you had seen the two men as I have seen them, on the same platform, you would have said these are two men fated never to coalesce; their views of life and their interests in it lie outside of one another. This I have been tempted to write to you while

the interest is on, and because I don't feel able at present for more. . . .

The relation between Carlyle, Emerson, and Ruskin differed *toto caelo* from that in Huxley's case ; it was on the part of all three at once just and reverential and without flaw, based on the fullest possible understanding of each other. My relation to Thomas Carlyle is this : I am a disciple, and I would no more think of criticising *Sartor* than I would the prophecies of Isaiah. My work is exegetic, not critical, and *that is what is wanted.*

. . . I have just come upon the following sentences in *Stones of Venice* bearing upon Science particularly in relation to Art. "Our scientific teaching, nowadays, is (in that regard) nothing more nor less than the assiduous watering of trees whose stems are cut through." "Raphael painted best what (scientifically) he knew least." "Science has proved utterly harmful to art, serving merely to draw away the hearts at once from the purposes of art and the power of nature, and to make out of the canvas and marble nothing more than materials for the exhibition of petty dexterity and useless knowledge." "The dull, wondering world believed that the greatness of Raphael, Michael Angelo, &c., rose out of their new knowledge (Renaissance) instead of that ancient religious root in which to abide was life, and from which to be severed was annihilation."

EXTRACTS FROM TWO LETTERS WRITTEN FIFTY YEARS AGO

1st Feb. '56.

I have just bought, and am busy studying, Carlyle's *French Revolution*—a book which I have long thirsted to possess, and which, now that I have got it, does not disappoint me as worthy of its author, who, happily still living and labouring at his calling as a literary man, is unquestionably (to me at least) the manliest and wisest these islands can boast of owning in these days—though in this belief, which is well founded, I might in vain range over Roxburghshire for a man to agree with me. His *French Revolution* is a poem, though it is prose in form, and a poem descriptive of the time as nothing calling itself poetry has been able to do in this time. He has chosen the French Revolution for his theme, because in it he finds pictured the true spirit and aims of the whole still subsisting European worlds, and by it he thinks he can show a present world to itself. The great obstacle to a just appreciation of his writings is his style, which almost demands the labour required to acquire a new

language ; which labour whoso with faith submits to shall not go without his reward. May the eyes of England soon open to his worth !—with which wish let me close.

11th Dec. '56.

How comes it that you have forsaken the Free High Church ? Did you ever hear Rainy, or have you decided against him without giving him a trial ? We had him preaching to us to-day—which is our fast—and truly, if he preach ordinarily as he did to-day, and I can conceive he would, I know few men in Edinburgh, or indeed in our Church, under whose ministrations it were more profitable to sit. I count him altogether a most worthy successor to Dr. Gordon, and that, making allowance for his youth, he resembles the Doctor in a quite remarkable degree. He is grave, solemn, and weighty in his matter and address—not a man to say tender or fine things—no sentimentalist or dilettante—but one who deals plainly with the heart, and stirs and solemnises it without the least straining after effect—you feel he is saying something quite private to your own soul and your God, and that what he says he does not for your admiration, but simply for your adinonition in matters of supreme concernment. He sets criticism at defiance, simply by the weight and practical urgency of what he says. His whole style is plain, but he never trifles or suffers trifling in

you. An altogether wholesome kind of preaching, and high-toned.

Rainy preaches again to-night, and I must listen with all attention, for he requires it, and the matter he deals in, if true, demands it; the more that, owing to its seeming plainness, it was some time before, in the forenoon, I became quite aware of the solemnity of what he was saying. Not that I could with my mode of thinking quite accept his mode of conceiving, but that I all along felt, and more or less *saw*, that, though I would have stated it otherwise, his words harboured a meaning that stood for something real and divine. Go to hear a man of, for his age, surprisingly high moral feeling, wide experience of the heart in its dealing with the Invisible, and who is more earnest to speak the truth than to speculate about it, or paint it, or whine over it; and you will not, as things go, come away disappointed.

. . . I have just returned from hearing Rainy again, and think quite as much of him as in the morning; his subject was the River in the City of God, and it was handled in a quite fresh and edifying style.

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